TARDIS GUIDE
PROMPT
MONTH
ZINE
JUNE 2026

TARDIS GUIDE PROMPT MONTH ZINE

JUNE 2026 EDITION

Hello!

Welcome to the very first edition of the TARDIS Guide Prompt Month Zine. Every few months on TARDIS Guide, it is my great pleasure to put together a prompt month challenge and watch the amazing community come together to share their works - and more importantly, to really support and uplift each other as we grow as creatives. Though a new prompt is given each day of the month and some of our amazing users did create a new piece for every single day of June, the only rules for the event are to be kind, be creative, and have fun.

It is a love of *Doctor Who* that has brought us all together, but in these pages you'll find so much more than just the Doctor and his friends. The writers and artists of TARDIS Guide have travelled to all corners of the Whoniverse; from Time Lords to Zygon duplicates, from UNIT to Torchwood and Sarah Jane's attic, from audios to books to TV. We've seen it all! In fact, this month saw over 100 works shared from 17 participants. Who needs the TV when we have TARDIS Guide?

I hope you will enjoy seeing the selection chosen here by our users as their favourite pieces from the month. It really showcases what an amazing community we have on TG, and just how brilliant our creatives are.

Until next time!

sircarolyn, June 2026

Writers of TARDIS GUIDE

DoctorStory
TARDIS Guide DoctorStory

dontblink
TARDIS Guide dontblink

Dukefan
TARDIS Guide Dukefan01
Ao3 Dukefan01

freckles_a_constellation
TARDIS Guide starry_freckles
Ao3 freckles_a_constellation

fumbling_for_fics
TARDIS Guide FumblingFoamasi
Ao3 fumbling_for_fics

ImpossibleGirl
TARDIS Guide ImpossibleGirl
Ao3 RegenerationGoneWrong

Jae
TARDIS Guide Jae
Ao3 stopmyhearts

Jamie
TARDIS Guide Jamie
Ao3 jsteele

Kalira
TARDIS Guide Kalira
Ao3 Kalira

Mercury
TARDIS Guide Mercury

Mindfog
TARDIS Guide Mindfog
Ao3 mindfogohbrilliant

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DAY 1: EXHAUSTION

by Take414

It had been three thousand, seven hundred, and sixty-eight days since they had landed. One decade of brutal fighting; a decade of death and destruction that rivalled anything Gastron had ever seen. Even now, standing here on the precipice of it all, the scale of everything overwhelmed him.

The dusty grey rock of the cliff ran out a few feet in front of him, falling into a sheer drop. His vision swam as he looked down and, stumbling backwards instinctively, he looked back up at the mound.

If he had thought the cliff was high up, the mound seemed unimaginable in scale. Millions upon millions of bodies, piled up high, in the greatest funeral pyre that the universe had ever seen. But these were not heroes waiting to be burnt, soon to be sent off to the afterlife in one last glorious farewell. No, the mound was more metal than organic, glinting in the faint light of stars in the eternal night. The Dalekanium shells littered the battlefield, and flowing from the mound was not a red river of blood, but a dark black, viscous sludge.

He heard footsteps, and turned around to look at the woman standing there, her dark blue eyes piercing him with a searching gaze. He snapped to salute. "Commander."

"Private Gastron," his commander nodded. "As you were." She walked up to the cliffside as he relaxed, right up to the edge, staring out towards the mount. She held that position for a moment, silently considering the now-silent battlefield.

"Commander?" Gastron asked, the title coming out as a hesitant breath, one that would have been snatched away by the wind – if any was present. The years of battle had robbed this lonely moon of even that.

"Yes?"

"Is it true? Are there more coming? Even after-" He stopped, unable to put into words what had happened here. How could anyone?

But she understood him well enough. She sighed, turning from the mound to look at him. "Probably. Unless our forces can intercept the Dalek battleships."

Silence fell for a moment as Gastron considered her words. Every day, he had awoken to gunfire and flame. The rough shaking of his fellow comrades, the rush to put on his boots and armour and grab his gun, before running outside to join the fight. Day in, day out, he waded through the ocean of madness and death. And through it all, no end had

ever been in sight.

As foolish as it had seemed, when he witnessed the past day, a flicker of hope had alighted in him. That it was over. That he could leave Skull Moon and go back to Gallifrey, go back to safety.

"This is your first deployment, isn't it?" His commander's voice snapped him out of his contemplation. He looked up at her face and nodded.

She smiled grimly. No warmth reached her eyes. But then again, would any of them ever feel warmth again?

"You know, I don't think it'll ever be over," she continued. "Even once this damn moon's reduced to nothing but debris, they won't send you back to Gallifrey. We don't have enough soldiers to afford that. You'll just be deployed in Ysalus, or Gardezza, or Zygor. And once you're finished there…"

"And when the war's over?" Even as he said the words, he knew how naïve the hope was. There could never be an end.

She laughed at that, actually laughed. He didn't think he'd heard such a sound for so long - centuries, maybe. He was only on his third regeneration, but his bones felt so heavy, so worn down by Dalek fire and screams that they could crumble into powder at any moment.

It wouldn't be over, even then. They'd find a way to make use of his ashes, to force him into this conflict even in death, while his mind was uploaded to the Matrix, strategising battle tactics for all eternity.

"What do you think will happen? When it's all over?" she asked.

Gastron shrugged. "You're right. It won't ever be."

"Oh, it will," she replied, her voice cold. "But what then? The only conflict the Time Lords have become embroiled in for millennia, and we've gone all in. But we've got a taste for blood now. And after eons of starvation, I don't think we'll abandon war entirely. It won't be the Daleks, but maybe it'll be the Cybermen. We might take offence at the Sontarans conquests. Or we'll go and find the Yssgaroth, and wipe them from their universe as well."

Gastron turned back to the mound, a chill filling his bones. His mouth felt dry, almost as dry as the moon itself, and he looked without seeing, considering. Wondering.

His commander continued to talk, as if ignorant of Gastron's state. "This war, it's changing all of us. I joined the army in my second regeneration, and I'm now on my tenth. We've resurrected monsters and myths from the depths of time, just to gain any

edge. Men of peace are turning to violence, and nobody's going in the opposite direction. And I don't think there's any way back."

Gastron wasn't listening. His blood-splattered face stared up at the sky where there once was a sun and a planet, where, in just three hours, there would be more ships arriving, eager to continue a war that sucked people in like a black hole, changing them and never letting go.

He didn't even realise that she had stopped talking, but too, was staring up at the blackened sky. For a while – neither of them knew how long – they stayed there, exhausted but unable to rest.

Eventually, the commander turned away. "Good night, Gastron. Get some sleep. You'll need it in the morning."

Gastron stayed for a while, but soon he, too, went to bed.

DAY 1: EXHAUSTION

No Distance Left to Run by DontBlink

The Doctor retreated to the familiar confines of his TARDIS and began to think about life and death. He tried sitting down on a chair but was too fidgety to stay still. He walked over to the time machine's console and started flicking some buttons, programming in some random coordinates, reached for the lever that would send the TARDIS into the Time Vortex, and… didn't pull it. How could he just go off on another adventure when Amy and Rory were gone?

His companions always left him in the end, and it always hit hard. Especially when those companions didn't leave by choice. Sure, he had sometimes tried to hide the pain, just keep on moving, moving through time and space, fighting the good fight and messing up his mind.

The Doctor knew that he needed to mourn, that it was important, it was the right thing to do, the human thing to do. But he didn't know how. At least, he didn't know how to mourn in a way that would let him continue with his current lifestyle.

So things needed to change. When the Shakri came to Earth, the Doctor had had to live a normal life with Amy and Rory for a while. Perhaps it would be a good idea to move the TARDIS to a fixed location, get away from all the exhausting dangers that time and space travel can cause, and rest.

The Doctor had no distance left to run. So he stopped running.

DAY 2: SHOCK COLLAR

I want to hurt you like you hurt me by Jae

Veklin doesn't know how Leela got the control. It had been in her own pocket, safe and only to be used if she herself felt she needed the punishment, another of Ollistra's cruel machinations. Maybe it had gotten knocked loose during a scuffle, a fall, maybe Veklin hadn't paid enough attention to the sneaky savage. It doesn't really matter, because now Leela is holding her thumb over the button that will make Veklin scream.

Leela's eyes hold her own, hard and calculating. Her lips are drawn, not saying a word. This isn't how it's meant to be. It's meant to be Veklin with her hand on the control, Leela with the collar around her neck, with fear in her eyes, cowering and obeying. Not that Veklin is cowering. She's just being as non-threatening as possible, that's all.

"You have to let me go. Leela–" She hates the way her voice is shaking. She's not afraid, dammit.

"Why?" Leela interrupts, voice hard as steel and without emotion.

"It isn't safe, the water is going to rise, I, we have to get out of here–" Her heart is too quick, her words far too hurried to pretend to be calm but she can already feel the water licking at her heels and Rassilon, she doesn't want to die. Especially not next to her.

"Then why did you lead us into this place? You knew it was a trap!" Angry and full of passion, yet still so very controlled. Leela's thumb twitches, purposeful rather than careless, and Veklin despises how she cannot suppress the flinch, the anticipation locking her muscles. Hates even more how Leela's gaze holds her trapped, catching every reaction.

"I was following orders. As you should have." It comes out as a snarl, hatred only contained by the weight of the collar around her neck, curses stuck in her throat choking her. "This is your fault."

"My fault?" Leela's chin drops, feet splashing up waves as she readjusts her stance. "It was your Ollistra who sent us here. You and me both." Realization dawns over her eyes. "You knew this was a trap. So Ollistra did too. Ha!" A smile pulls at her lips, teasing and almost cruel. "You know what this means? I was the bait." The panic rises ice-cold in Veklin's chest, breath going fast, shaking her head, silently begging Leela not to say what she had already known to be true. "Ollistra wants you dead."

"What about you? You're here too. If she wants me dead, then at least I will die knowing your pathetic human lungs gave out long before mine." Fear making space for the anger always in her hearts, muscles clenching in preparation as if there was

something she could hit.

"But I knew that. My heart beats only as long as Ollistra sees fit. Yours however–" There is something she can hit. Someone.

The punch throws them both down, murky water drenching their clothes. The control slips from Leela's grip, the collar a useless weight around Veklin's throat. At least she doesn't need to worry about the electricity spreading in the water. Not that there are any thoughts in Veklin's brain. There is only the red-hot anger, the rage finding the only target in range, clawing for purchase against the warrior's leather, to reach any bit of skin.

Teeth scrape against flesh, nails scratching and pulling at hair and skin, water squelching and sloshing around their wet bodies, violence for violence's sake, pulling each other under more important than the oxygen in their lungs. In a move more luck than skill for all her instinct and abilities, Leela hooks her fingers under Veklin's collar, pulling herself upright. Water is already lapping at her breasts.

Chest heaving, feet trying to find traction on the floor, one hand holding Veklin's head under water, the other wrangling the Gallifreyan's flailing limps. Wet hair clinging to skin, shiny leather covering her form she is a sight to behold. Only when Veklin stops thrashing does she pull her up again, fiery eyes burning into half-conscious ones. "Are you listening, Veklin?" Her breath still goes to fast for many words at once, single heart beating a staccato in her chest. "I will leave here. I will fight and I will survive. I do not care if you do." Her lips are too close, breath whispering against Veklin's ear. "You can die alone if that is your choice. Or you can come with me."

Her fingers release the collar, letting Veklin fall back under, shivering, stumbling to keep herself over water. Her eyes follow Leela stalking out of the room, turning to concentrated strokes when the water rises too high to walk. The collar pulls at her throat. Is it still recording her heartsbeat? Is Ollistra watching, disappointed that she yet breathes? What will she say if Veklin comes back alive? If Leela drops her corpse at Ollistra's feet? Her muscles tremble in the cold water, barely keeping her upright.

If she stays here, she'll drown soon.

DAY 3: SUNRISE

The Twin Suns of Gallifrey by Mercury

In many societies throughout many galaxies, the sunrise is associated with opportunity. One such society is that of the Time Lords. On Gallifrey there were two suns and so it was said that opportunity would shine wherever one was. This notion, however, is regarded as childish by most Time Lords. While the Shobogans and Time Tots were happy to look up at the sky and draw parallels to a new and exciting day, the ones in the citadel found it naive.

Time Lords were a very unromantic race as it were. They would tell stories to their children but for beings who could travel anywhere in the universe and were capable of resurrection they looked at everything scientifically. They lacked superstition because they felt it to be naivete. They lacked wonder because they felt it to be childish. When you can see and do anything the Universe begins to lose its luster. What was once the largest thing that could ever be becomes small, structured, and predictable.

There were some Time Lords who still found wonder in the universe. These Time Lords invariably left Gallifrey to experience the magic of the universe first hand in their own way for better or for worse. Renegades, the other Time Lords called them that with condescension and perhaps a small amount of jealousy at their ability to see more in the universe than the ones in the citadel ever could.

Two such men stood on two similar planets watching two similar sunrises from two similar clifftops. They both saw opportunity in that sun. One man wore white and the other wore black. There were obviously other colours, some even more prevalent but it's easier to simplify it into that. one man in white and another in black.

The man in white's life was filled with opportunity, possibly because in a way it had just begun. He turned his fresh new eyes to the universe and saw nothing but brilliance, wonder, and fun. Of course that was in large part inspired by the fact that he saw the universe not just through his eyes but also those of his friends. He didn't know yet that the brilliance would leave him on Earth upon the arrival of the Cybermen. He didn't know yet that the wonder would leave him on Terminus. He couldn't know yet that the fun would leave him when the Daleks returned and Davros schemed. He would soon realize that he was not simply a man in a great universe, he was a good man in an awful one. But not yet, right now existence was a wonderful thing that he intended to spend wandering through the still shiny universe. Right now he is the Doctor.

The man in black knew suffering as well. Mostly because he caused it. His eyes were also new to him but they weren't quite fresh. They were stolen. But then the universe is full of things that weren't yet his. Things that should be his. Opportunities. But to him existence was desperate and dangerous. He lacked the lives to throw away in pursuit of

power. But he pursued it all the same. He had a remarkable knack for escaping death. The universe seemed to need him. It needed both of them. But for very different reasons.

Perhaps the worlds they stood on could illustrate this point. They were both very different and yet so similar. The Doctor stood on a devastated world destroyed by greed. It was once a beautiful planet called Fictale filled with fairytale-like beauty. So beautiful in fact that writers found it to be an excellent muse for their stories. Soon more and more visited from all over the galaxy. Docking ports, tourist stops, hotels all had to be built to accommodate them. Ironically the quality of the stories being written there declined faster than the quality of the planet. They would use it as a crutch rather than an inspiration and write worse things as a result. That didn't stop them from coming however and soon the planet was utterly destroyed and ruined by ecological mishaps and a few unexpected disasters caused by human error. Once the beauty was gone the tourism market that held up the planet's economy disappeared leaving the natives economically stunted and in debt in a cold dying world with no resources to travel into the stars with. The Doctor looked into the smog filled horizon and saw an opportunity. He would take the time (for he had a lot of it) to make things right. To heal a dying planet and save the people on it and to make something new. Because there is always something new. That is what he does and that is how he sees the universe.

The man in black had visited Fictale once. He found it utterly repulsive and the scenery utterly overrated. So much so, in fact, that he took the time (for he had a lot of it) to pitch the planet to the nearest Galactic Tourism Bureau. He would visit it again a century or two later to kill a few of the more qualified people leading to some not so accidental disasters. He gained nothing from doing any of that but it pleased him so he did. The planet he stood on now was equally destroyed. This one was called Regulum and had been torn apart by a war so fearsome, meaningless, and unpredictable that the planet had been quarantined by the Shadow Proclamation because any outsider would almost instantly be consumed by the carnage. It was even in the number 4 spot in the Galactic Guardian's "Top 10 Most Dangerous Planets Right Now" list. The man in black looked into the war torn horizon and saw an opportunity. He felt no fear of the danger. He had fought more dangerous species and brought them to their knees. He was the Master after all. He would claim the power lying within the planet. The power that causes war and destruction and created the never ending war in the first place. He would take it as his own and use it to make the galaxy his. That is what he does and that is how he sees the universe.

But no one accomplishes anything watching from a distance. So the Doctor steps into his magic blue box that brought him the opportunity to see and save the universe and the Master stepped into his own TARDIS that gives him the opportunity to control and destroy it.

DAY 4: PRIDE

sweet like honey lavender by Reece

"So, Pride Parade, whaddaya say?"

"What?" Yaz said in response as The Doctor zipped around the console as per usual.

"Pride parade! It's pride month and as you know, the world is in desperate need of more of that at the moment. Plus they're always fun and I've met a bunch of people there! Unless you're homophobic."

Yaz was silent. Gagged even.

"Kidding, that was a joke, I know you're not homophobic," the Doctor said. "Otherwise, how'd you end up with me?"

The Doctor was in an excitable mood. This was normal for her. Yaz had given up trying to fit words in. She'd learned from Jack how lippy she used to be, and that trait clearly hadn't gone away yet.

"Which parade though? There's dozens all across time," Yaz then said. She'd researched many in her time. Specifically because she'd had to stand guard at one as a police, and the other because well... she was a lesbian, she was going to go to one of these regardless.

"And space, can't forget space! But Earth ones are my favourite," the Doctor replied. "How about... perfect!" She grinned. She motioned Yaz over to the main lever to send them off. Ages ago, she'd be doing this with Graham at one side and Ryan at the other. But they'd left, and it was just the two of them now. Yaz had gotten used to that overtime. Just her and The Doctor. Wild. "You're not going to get changed? It's about to be pretty warm out there."

"Says you who's always in that coat."

"I like this coat! And I'm not always in it." The Doctor paused. "Well maybe I am but you know?"

Yaz giggled. "Yeah. Now come along," she said with a smile.

The TARDIS opened out into a road, one that had been barred off, and filled to the brim with people. Most in organised groups such as the brownies and fire fighters, but a lot of them just in friend groups or what seemed to be pride clubs.

“Sheffield Pride 2018, you’re welcome,” said The Doctor. Yaz threw her arm around her.

“Right then. We better join up,” Yaz said with a smile.

The Doctor then turned on her heel, venturing back into the TARDIS, but was only gone a minute, re-appearing with a small bag. “Remembered I had these. You know, to blend in.”

Yaz opened the bag she’d received. A pride flag! A lesbian one at that. The Doctor had the standard rainbow. “How did you get these?” she asked.

“Awe you know, been about. Jack thinks they’re tatty. I never saw why.”

She pulled Yaz into the crowd as the parade began. It was crowded, sure, but Yaz was happy to be in the centre of it, rather than at the sides.

She’d figured herself out a while ago. At first, she didn’t actually know if she liked guys or not. Being mistaken as a couple when she was on board with Ryan was really not something she was keen on, and even before then she’d hated being coupled off with her mates. But she knew that was normal for people to feel. But she just didn’t feel anything romantic towards guys.

With girls, that was easy. She'd had her crushes here and there, and most of them happened to be girls. This most recent one….well. It was The Doctor. And that was starting to become glaringly obvious.

“Something on your mind?” the Doctor asked.

“Oh uh- just thinking about how I was security last year.”

“How was that then?”

“Well, you didn’t really get into much of the action. Couldn’t drink either. But I did stick around for the music after,” Yaz recalled. “You probably saw it.”

“Not that one, bit busy that day,” the Doctor said. She helped Yaz drape her flag around her, pulling her own around her like a scarf. “Worlds always needing saving. You know what it’s like.”

Yaz chuckled. “Yeah.”

The parade took them through town, dispersing them near a field where all of the big activities started. There was already a cover band setting up on the stage, food trucks and even-

“Face painting! Oh could we get our face painted Yaz? I love getting mine painted,

except when I don't," the Doctor said.

"Yeah. Wouldn't mind that. If we get food after," Yaz replied.

"Oh of course, of course."

"Ah, officer Khan. Part of the activities this year?" came a voice. Yaz turned around, finding one of the security guards was someone she knew from last year. "Thought you would've joined up!" they said.

"Yeah well, been travelling," Yaz replied. She and The Doctor greeted them, watching as many others were let through the gates and given wristbands. Drag queens, furries, everyone was welcome. "Oh uh, this is my friend The Doctor."

"Nice to meet you! I'm Yaz's girlfriend," she said. Yaz went a little red, pulling her away. The officer cocked an eyebrow, but still had a smile on their face.

"Anyway, chat later? We wanna look around for a bit."

"Oh by all means, be my guest."

"Good, good." Yaz waved them off, then pulled The Doctor close. "Girlfriend? When did we decide that!?"

"I thought we decided on the TARDIS!"

"If I introduce you as a friend, you don't go around saying 'hey, I'm her girlfriend!'"

The Doctor's face dropped a little. Yaz rolled her eyes, but kept a smile on her face.

"But we did decide that. So, I'll allow it," she said. She stood tall, though her height was similar to The Doctor's, so it wasn't much. "So, face painting?"

"You took the words out of my mouth Yasmin Khan." She smiled. Yaz took her hand, gently pulling her over to the face painting stand. Most of the line were kids getting rainbows on their face, but there were a handful of older teens too. Yaz wasn't embarrassed either way. She let the Doctor go first, and she got a bunch of rainbow streaks on her face. She looked adorable. And well, it matched her flag.

Yaz went the same way, getting a lesbian flag over her face in the shape of a rainbow. It also matched the leather jacket and red shirt combo she had on. Much like The Doctor was matching with her coat and rainbow striped shirt.

"Aw Yaz, you look great!" the Doctor said, embracing her. "Right then, ice cream?"

"It's on you," Yaz replied. "Face paints may be donation only but they're gonna run you

a fiver each."

"Aw really?" the Doctor questioned.

"Not even the most expensive thing they have," Yaz joked.

The Doctor managed to fish some change out of her seemingly endless pockets, and soon the two sat on the grass watching the cover bands play as they devoured cones. Yaz looked up into the bright blue sky. "I'm glad we got to do this."

"Yeah. Pride is a very important thing in this world. It unites the communities together. Did you know the miners unions still support pride in Wales because they helped them out during the miners strike?" the Doctor rambled. Yaz just let her, she usually had a point to them.

"Yeah, I watched the film," Yaz replied. "You're right though. It is important," she said, finishing her cone. Then after she wiped her face with a napkin, she placed a kiss on The Doctor's cheek.

"Yaz!" The Doctor blushed a bit. Rare for her.

"I think I get to do that. After all, you were the one who brought us here."

Then she turned The Doctor's head towards her. "Love ya."

The Doctor said nothing but just smiled. She didn't really know if she could say it back or not. Though Yaz took this silence as another opportunity to kiss her, this time on the lips. "Now, whadaya say to another walk around, I'll pay for whatever's next," she said. The Doctor nodded.

"Of course, lead the way."

Yaz obliged, pulling her girlfriend up, and leading her back into the crowd.

DAY 5: ONE LAST NIGHT TOGETHER

something that I could never save by Jae

There is a soft breeze through the window, carefully closed with patched cloth to keep the insects and dust out. A rare blessing on Unity, that doesn't know much in the way of comfortable weather, and Leela welcomes it all the more. Veega needs it.

She's burning up with fever next to her, thin blanket covering her out of a desire for comfort more than for warmth. Leela hasn't used one since – since before Veega. But the sickness makes Veega too cold, then too hot and cold again, leaving Leela to chase after it to bring some comfort. It doesn't seem to do much.

What Veega needs is medicine. With a sigh Leela thinks of the medical bays of Gallifrey, their sterile, dead rooms blazed with lights that made her feel unwell. But their science worked, could heal illnesses in minutes. Nothing like that existed on Unity. Maybe in the city – violently, Veega lurches beside her, lungs constricting.

It had been happening more and more now. Coughing fits that kept Veega – and Leela with her – awake, or woke her up in the middle of the night. She misses it now. Because now, Veega isn't waking up. Too exhausted, body entirely depleted of energy, to even protect her own airway.

Reaching out a hand to hold down her lover's shoulder, the other carefully opening her mouth, turning the head back, letting in as much air as possible as her body fights against the dirt in her lungs. Heart pulses in her chest, counting the beats knowing they are too fast to be a measurement, Leela waits. Waits until Veega pulls in a breath a bit deeper, until her eyelids flutter, looking up, beyond words, just pulling in the dusty air. Leela lets out a breath, hadn't even noticed she was holding it. She can never breathe when Veega cannot, knows somewhere deep down her heart will stop when Veega's does.

Brushing the hair from her face, cradling her as she wakes, panic flowing away from her at the gentle strokes, Leela mutters words in a language she only half remembers herself, shushing and soothing. It's her mothers voice in her dreams, the tongue of the Sevateem long forgotten in all the galaxies. There is no telling if her people even still existed, Leela having exceeded her natural life span centuries ago. Or maybe they don't yet exist, or have never existed at all. It's hard to tell, with a Time War raging around the universe.

A war that Leela knows is coming closer and closer, that will overwhelm her little family one day. She can never shake the feeling that it is haunting her every step, to take away anything she loves, Andred, Narvin, Romana, just waiting for a mistake.

Sleep has eluded her for weeks, foreboding filling her, debating running to the city just once, to find the cure Veega so desperately needs, to hope that the universe would grant her one night of grace, that she could come back to the farm still standing and Veega still breathing.

“Leela–” Even the single word triggers a coughing fit, mercifully brief this time. “Stop – stop thinking. I can see you worrying.” With a shaking hand, Veega reaches to smooth over the creases in Leela's forehead. A laugh breaks out of Leela's chest. Almost dying, and yet Veega still does not want her to worry.

“You know it is no use. I will always worry for you, Veega.”

Veega just smiles at the soft voice, sadness growing in her eyes. “Promise me you'll take care of Rayo. Keep him safe.”

The laughter falls away from Leela's face like rain descending on a summer evening. “You know I will. But Veega, you will be alright. I will go into the city and get you medicine, and I will keep you both safe, you know that.” Shaking her head, another cough spilling droplets of blood on her lips, Veega pulls herself upright, out of Leela's arms.

“Promise me. I know you don't want to see it, but – promise me.” Droplets are glinting on her face, tears or sweat, Leela cannot tell in the darkness. Her own chest feels too heavy for the words.

“I do. I do, Veega. No harm will come to him as long as I draw breath. I swear it.” The silent acknowledgement within pains her, the heaviness of weeks without sleep dragging at her, the falling doom only confronted under the cover of the night, as if it may not be real here. She doesn't say that she already knows the spot where Veega's grave will lie, under the single tree of the farm, far away from the nightraiders, a spot to sit and rest and keep watch over. In the darkness, maybe her eyes say enough.

“But tomorrow, I shall go to–” Her voice breaks when another coughing fit comes over Veega, hands reaching to keep her upright, to position her to let blood and crime up and out, knowing they are stuck too deep. This is no enemy Leela can fight. Not something she can keep Veega safe from, a silent death creeping closer and closer, the universe silent to Leela's pleas. Helplessly, she strokes circles on skin, hums a melody in the voice of her own mother, words long vanished from her human brain.

Romana had offered to find them for her once. Veega had never asked, just sighed and muttered her own words that no one else understood. They had learned to read each other together, by feel and laughs and tears, to carry the parts that would die with them. A stillness in the ocean, a haven to rest at, surrounded by the waves and the wind. Leela had been born lost, content with the way she never belonged because what else could she do, fought for those who did not belong either, given them something she could never have. Until Veega and Rayo. Until Unity.

In the dark, Leela embraces the woman that is her home.

DAY 6: LAST KISS

it's make believe, it's all pretend by Jae

She keeps repeating it in her mind, after. Rachel's voice over the intercom, Ian standing beside her, his teary voice saying goodbye, her own throat paralyzed. She should have said something. Anything. But she doesn't even get this, these last, meaningful words, the regret of feelings left unsaid, a life not lived. Ian does.

Rachel's last words to her not even to her, but to all of them. Mathematical excitement, an order to leave. It is fitting in a way. Science had always taken the first place in Rachel's mind. Allison was an afterthought at best. Worth nothing, a glorified assistant kept around out of pity. And anything they might've had - well it is not her place to grieve. Not like that at least. Not like Ian gets to.

He doesn't even do it right. Allison doesn't pretend to know everything, has only the bits Rachel told her in quiet moments here and there, where they survived the many holes in her memories, but she knows enough not to bring flowers, to cover her head at the grave. Maybe that counts for something, even when there is no body to bury.

Seeing Ian like that, grief-stricken, a hole in his heart, like a puppy left behind, talking of dates and dinners and her voice, it's wrong. Rachel didn't – she never – except maybe Allison is the one who's wrong. Maybe the feeling of Rachel's lips on hers, of fingers on her skin, is just something she imagined, a product of her destroyed brain making sense of the grief.

No, no, it's real. It has to be. There is no more metal in her skull, no reason for her to hallucinate. And even if it wasn't – she doesn't want a world without this. Without Rachel. Except that is precisely what this is. Forced to watch her die out of her own curiosity, the inability to let a question rest, trapped in her flimsy body unable to do anything.

She tries to remember the last time – the last time they were anything and lands on a stolen kiss in the truck two days before her world ended. Too tight for two people and their scientific equipment, heart racing from the lack of space and the proximity, her skirt almost too short to be professional, a remnant from when she had been younger and hip, before her body started sagging and she lost her touch, Rachel judging but looking. Ian in the front, entirely unaware of what they were doing. That was real.

It has to be. There is still the faded imprint of a bruise on her elbow where she knocked it against the door, and another one just below her neckline where Rachel - it was real. Whatever Ian has been imagining between him and Rachel, Allison knows what she had was real. Even if it was a secret, if it was sick and dangerous, risking both their

careers, even if Allison's grief is chaining up her voice, if she will never be able to speak of it again.

Even if Rachel was gone. As long as Allison lives, whatever was between them existed. She still can't believe it. Keeps thinking surely there must have been a way for Rachel to get out. But then why isn't she talking with them? Why is she letting them live with this horrible pain? Rachel had been callous at times, strict, but she would never have let this pass.

So, Rachel Jensen is dead. And all Allison can do is remember a last kiss in a cramped truck that should never have been.

DAY 7: VAMPIRE AU

oops, i got some blood on your tshirt (i'm so sorry if my vampire teeth hurt) by sircarolyn

2017

Allison had her eyes set on a new girl and Rachel wasn't having it. She had just taken up the post as Professor at the university and she wasn't about to let Allison sour it for her yet again.

Unfair, perhaps. They both had their appetites after all.

She would get Allison to lure the girl up here. To see if her assessment of the girl's intellect was correct. To see if she would allow Allison a new plaything or if she would simply claim the girl for herself. Allison always whined so prettily when Rachel denied her her pleasures.

2009

Rachel snarled at the screen as it yet again stumbled and barely reacted to her input. "Damn thing," she muttered, stabbing her finger at it. No response. How was she supposed to keep up with technology if she couldn't work it?

Her eyes darted to the ugly, thick gloves on the desk. A present from Allison who was clearly tired of her constant frustration. The touch screens didn't respond well to their cold hands. But she refused to look ridiculous so she had spurned the gift.

Later, Allison would catch her in the act of looking inelegant and just smile.

2005

“Miss Williams, will you turn that ghastly music down?” Glared at Gilmore in doorway. Should have never given him more senses. Always complained: too loud, too bright. Always complained: I don't recall agreeing to be your butler.

Still tasted good as ever. Better, with Rachel's blood in his beating heart – still beating, for now. Frowned every time Rachel alluded to full change. Never seemed happy. Never had but these days, lived like a man aware he should have been dead for years.

And had no taste for music whatsoever.

Gave him best pout and reached to turn the dial up.

2001

Another belt. Loops of faded jeans looking tired, weighed down with fake leather and chains. Waistline barely on her hips to begin with. If only jewellery wasn't silver. Wanted to piss Rachel off with bellybutton piercing.

Rachel hated the crop top and straightened hair. Had never been interested in the modern, except for technology. Wouldn't even put charms on new mobile. Called Allison gauche and tacky. At least didn't look frumpy in clothes from 1910. Hip and cool. All the better to go clubbing in. To lure people to her, in the smoky dark. To feel human, for a second.

2000

“Happy New Year, Rachel.” Allison raised her champagne flute and downed the contents. Rachel regretted allowing her to get a soda stream. Allison didn't care that Rachel thought fizzy wine was repulsive. She would drink real champagne on an occasion like this and damn all the consequences. Later, Allison would not comment on how long Rachel spent in the usually unused bathroom.

Rachel, without looking, slipped her hand into Allison's. Gilmore said nothing as they watched the fireworks, all together, all silent in their own reveries. Allison squeezed back, knowing they were both thinking of a different new year, apart.

1975

“He'll die soon, Rachel. Humans don't keep long, you know that.” Allison made her eyes as big and wet as she could, and Rachel reached out to touch her cheek.

“I know you're fond of our pet, Allie, but I only turn the best.” Allison leaned into the hand cupping her face and purred. Rachel's thumb brushed over her cheekbone and was glad Allison's eyes were closed so she couldn't see the fond smile.

“I'm not saying we have to turn him completely…”

“A thrall?” Rachel scoffed. Allison grunted in agreement. “He won't like that idea one

bit.”

So, actually...

1962

Gilmore dismissed the sergeant and dropped into his desk chair like a rock dropped in a lake, his attention rippling out to the tall stack of paperwork before him. Being stationed out in the country was always wretched. At least the pub in this town seemed decent. He was about to while away a lot of hours in there sampling the local pint. Still, it would only be a year. Then he'd be back to civilisation.

He flicked to the day in his calendar that he had circled in red. Just 13 months. He just had to survive until then.

1903

The shrieks carried all the way up from the basement out into the forest. It was an old house, dilapidated, in the middle of nowhere and looked to all the world like it'd been forgotten. Good. It meant nobody would look for them here.

She'd had to stash Allison in the basement for now. The girl would not stop wailing and the sound of it made Rachel's blood so hot she wasn't sure she could keep control. She needed to hold herself together, for her Allison.

A car drove past and the young man stopped when Rachel waved him down.

1898

Confusing. Why was she lying? Must have been lying. Knew it was false, knew all of Rachel's secrets. Why wouldn't Rachel have told her about this? Or got them away if they were in a real danger? Why would Rachel lie about who she claimed to be?

Cursed herself. Her head much better these days, full belly and safe with Rachel. Could almost think straight. Almost used to new life.

So why this woman was telling her Rachel was monster? Woman's teeth glinted sharp, same monster they were. Women crooked finger again, and despite the coiling doubt in stomach, followed.

1636

In the morning, she would go down to the cellar with her father to recite their prayers. As a child, she had questioned why they had to hide themselves, but now she was all too aware of the cruelty of men.

More than anything, she wanted to learn. Despite her father encouraging her reading habits, he did not want her to draw attention to them. He was afraid. He was right to be. But she refused to be afraid. Even if it killed her, she was going to take life by the throat until it gave her what she wanted.

DAY 8: MISSION FAILURE

A Broader Scope by fumbling_for_fics

At a few feet long and weighing several pounds, the modified De-Mat Gun required some strength to carry, but the weapon felt even heavier in the Doctor's arms. She paid no attention to the bramble cutting into her legs as she pushed through the forest; her focus was on suppressing the nagging instinct that threatened to steal her away from what she had to do.

After trekking half a mile beneath the searing heat of the twin suns – a dispassionate inferno that seared her scalp even beneath the canopy of the trees – the Doctor emerged onto the cliffside. In almost every direction, a similarly green landscape stretched towards the horizon in parallel with the hazy golden hues of the endless sky. The Doctor recovered her bearings and moved a short distance further along the open space, shifting awkwardly over rocky terrain with the ungainly weapon kept close to her body. She allowed herself a small smile as she came upon the vantage point. The relief quickly gave way to astonishment, however, as the first sign of civilisation graced her wide eyes.

From where she stood, looking down and across from several thousand metres, the congregation of buildings was small enough to fit behind her thumb. Their stone edifices and simple architecture conveyed what the Doctor already knew; the planet was still primitive, its people still developing their technologies and cultures, but the information she had been given prior to arriving failed to prepare her for how beautiful it was.

"You never learn," she chuckled. The Doctor was without company, but she learned long ago to her dismay that she was never alone. "Next time you put together an assignment," she said, speaking to the air and the ears beyond it, "throw in some pictures. It'll give me something to look forward to, at least."

There was no reply or indication of acknowledgement, but the Doctor knew better than to loiter in her current circumstances. She glanced back at the buildings, at the intricate patterns along the outer wall surrounding the settlement, and found herself wondering what they would look like up close. She dismissed the thought as quickly as it came to her and, with a sigh, assumed her position.

Lying on her stomach – and trying not to think about how the dust was ruining her favourite shirt – she positioned the De-Mat against a small rock and looked through the scope. The optics were pristine, designed exclusively for the Division with specifications capable of sighting a target in the next spatial dimension. But its features mattered little to the Doctor—she was here for a reason, and the reason was all she could bring herself to think about.

She panned across the walls of the settlement and tilted up its many levels. It was a humble yet sturdy fortification, but it was evident that its construction was not exclusively practical. The brickwork bore ornate carvings with smatterings of colour in patterns and symbols the Doctor could not decipher; murals and artwork caked its lower half, the intricate designs disrupted irregularly by painted hands whose smeared and varied dimensions suggested the work of rambunctious children.

The Doctor twisted a dial on the scope and watched as the visual display shifted to depict the sights behind the wall. Most of the buildings were squat and modest with flat rooftops that either overlapped onto one another or were connected through short bridges of rope and wood. In every building, through every window, the people were at peace. Children ran in and out of their houses, playing games of every kind as they screamed and laughed while parents leaned against doorways in conversation with their neighbours.

This was a happy and loving community. The Doctor tried not to think about it.

After several minutes, the target appeared. He walked among the thronging masses in one of the more popular streets, fenced in with the rabble by the stalls lining the fronts of every shop. Each of the vendors seemed to know him by name, calling out to him and asking about his family or his own wellbeing. With each exchange of jokes and goodwill, his green skin shimmered in the sunlight as laughter rang sweetly from his fanged mouth—he was as much a part of this community as everyone else.

The Doctor watched him peel away from the crowd into an alley dense with shadow. He climbed a clumsy set of stairs and returned into the light of the suns with a smile that only grew wider as he lay down on the warm stone of the rooftop. As he closed his eyes and rested his hands behind his head, the Doctor realised why the Division insisted on providing nothing more than a description.

They knew she could never kill a child.

The assignment was shrouded in such secrecy that she was never even given the name of their planet, but, despite knowing little about his species, the Doctor could tell the boy was still an adolescent. She had seen playfulness and confidence like his in the young of countless peoples across the universe. In his face, she saw the children of Gallifrey, Time Lord and Shobogan alike; in his laughter, she could hear the melody of a thousand nursery rhymes and the love of the parents who sang them; in this young boy, the Doctor saw an innocent child at the mercy of someone beyond his comprehension– she saw herself and the life she never had.

A breath that she had forgotten to let go slipped through her parted lips. The tension in her finger faded and the pressure of the trigger against it followed. The Doctor let the De-Mat clatter to the ground as she rose to her feet; she dusted off her shirt and fixed her collar, grimacing at the weapon whenever it registered in the corner of her eye. From her jacket pocket, she produced her glasses and squinted in the direction of the

distant community. She spared another glance towards the sky and her spectators before starting down the path towards the settlement.

The journey from the cliffside was swift yet still mired by thick vegetation, a feature the Doctor was thankful for as she drew nearer to the fortifications. She kept close to the trees and bushes, watching as what appeared to be soldiers patrolled the length of the wall, and waited for an opportunity. When two of the soldiers began a conversation with each other, the Doctor dashed across the open space and pressed herself flush against the stone.

'Why can't you just give us a perception filter as standard?' she whispered. 'Oh, let me guess. "Because it wasn't deemed necessary for your mission."' The Doctor rolled her eyes, 'Like anything ever goes to plan with you lot.' From a subtle space by her breast pocket, nestled between her glasses and her TARDIS key, the Doctor produced a small metallic device with a smirk. 'There you are.' Hovering her thumb over a button on its end, she closed her eyes, 'Short-range, don't fail me now.'

With a sudden fizz of energy, the Doctor found herself opening her eyes on the other side of the wall. She suppressed a cheer, pocketed the teleporter, and quickly studied her immediate surroundings. There was a distance no greater than five metres between the wall and the nearest building. The small space was made smaller by the several stacks of crates piled haphazardly around her; the ground was covered by loose sheeting whose stained fabric bore no difference to the dirt underneath it. From the other side of the building, she could hear the bustle of a market and gritted her teeth.

Taking one of the sheets from the floor, the Doctor took a deep breath and draped it over herself as a makeshift cloak. She coughed at the stench 'Okay, maybe technology does matter. What I wouldn't give for a washing machine…'

The crowd paid no attention to the Doctor as she moved among them, too engrossed in their own conversations to even recognise she was there. She followed the path that the young boy walked and, eventually, ascended the same stairs to find him as he was, still basking in the suns with a smile on his face.

The Doctor watched him carefully, struggling to reconcile the information she was given with the sight before her own eyes. Then, as though he could hear the workings of her mind, the boy sat up and turned around. "Who are you?" he asked without a trace of fear in his voice.

She shrugged off the sheet and, with it, what few pretences she had fell away. "I'm the Doctor."

"Oh. Am I ill? Have I got heat sickness again? I told dad I was better now."

"No, it's not that."

"Then what's wrong? It's not mum, is it?"

"Why would it be your mum?"

"I don't know," he shrugged. "I just don't know why else a doctor would come and find me."

The Doctor walked slowly towards him and sat cross-legged by his side. "Nobody's ill,' she began. 'Look, if we're being honest–"

"We should always be honest," he interrupted. "That's what we're taught when we're kids."

She smiled, "You still are a kid. You still are..."

"I'm sorry, Doctor, but I don't think I understand."

"That's all right," she said to herself. "Neither do I."

"You don't look like anyone I've met before," the boy confessed. "And, I'm sorry if it's rude, but... Well, you don't sound like anyone I've met before either."

"I get that a lot. But, do you know what the good thing about that is? It means there's only one of me. There's only one of you, too. We're unique."

"Unique?"

"That's right. Unique. One of a kind. There's nobody out there like us."

"Is that why you came to find me?" he asked. "Because I'm unique?"

Despite her efforts to the contrary, the Doctor was reminded of what she had been told on Gallifrey. The wishes of the High Council were spoken through the words of the Division, and their instructions were clear; she was imprisoned between the layers of Time Lord bureaucracy and given no alternative but to fulfil the objective of her assignment.

Seeing the innocent face of the young boy, the Doctor forced herself to remember why she was here. She was not sent to this planet to admire its people and their accomplishments. She was here to avert a terrible future.

"Yes," the Doctor finally said. "That's exactly why I'm here."

"And where did you come from? How far away?" he asked.

She faced away from the suns and pointed at an empty part of the sky. “Do you see there?” she asked. “When the suns go down and it gets dark, do you see the lights in the sky?”

“The little fires?”

“Exactly.”

The boy was incredulous. “You come from the fire?”

The Doctor chuckled, “I wish. No, I’m from a world. A planet, just like you. But it’s a very, very long way from here.”

“Then how did you get here?”

An infectious grin played across the Doctor’s face. “And that,” she said, “is how every great story starts, isn’t it?”

The fiery rays of the second sun sparkled against the silver leaves. A light breeze moved the branches, but everything in the colonnade was silent as Gat gazed out at the garden. The sturdy tree in front of her was once a sapling; she had watched it grow steadily over the centuries, changing so gradually that its transformation only registered on the solemn mornings as she humoured a rare silence in the Capitol. The roots were knotted and firm in the ground, and though the tree had reached its full height long ago, its branches still dared to touch the sky. It was a relic determined to endure.

The clicking of boots against the stone floor pulled Gat from her contemplation. She turned to see the Doctor approach with her typical swagger and infuriating disregard for secrecy. “I take it you’ve got a point you want to make,” she called out to Gat.

“Several.”

“It’s a long walk,” she said, gesturing to the vast and empty space around them. “If you start now, we might be done by the time I get there.”

Gat folded her arms and stood in silence.

“You sure know how to keep a girl waiting,” the Doctor said when she stopped.

“And you seem an expert at going against the brief.”

The Doctor rolled her eyes. “Look, Gat, I don’t know why you care so much about this.”

“Of course you don’t!” she hissed. “Because you don’t know what it’s like to succeed on

merit, do you? You're her favourite, you get everything handed to you."

"Her favourite?" the Doctor scoffed. "That's the first I've heard of it."

"She's the reason you weren't pulled back the minute you dropped the De-Mat. You should count yourself lucky."

"Lucky? Do you even know what that assignment was? Who the target was? He was a child, Gat."

For a moment, there was silence. For a moment, the Doctor had hope that, for the first time, Gat would finally understand.

"And you didn't neutralise him."

The Doctor's hearts sank. "Neutralise? It's a De-Mat. If I fired that thing, he wouldn't have existed. An entire life erased like he was never there, a universe going on without someone who's meant to be there."

"That was the point, Doctor. We had to stop what he was going to become. And you failed."

"An entire life! He was a good kid, an innocent kid!"

"And that makes him exempt?"

"Yes!"

Gat felt the wind send a chill along her neck. "That doesn't change things. You had a mission, and you failed it."

"You and I have very different definitions."

"It's not our only difference," she spat.

The Doctor smirked, "I suppose not. For a start, of the two of us, you're the blunt instrument." The sight of Gat's expression twisting with irritation pleased the Doctor more than she had anticipated. "You think fulfilling the objective is the only way to measure success."

"Don't get pedantic, Doctor."

"It's my prerogative. Now, shut up, I'm not done," she said, holding up an admonishing finger. "You wanted that boy erased. Neutralised, killed, whatever. And you all knew full well that I'd never do that."

“You’ve proven yourself to be unpredictable, Doctor,” said Gat. “I’m not surprised. In fact, I’m surprised you didn’t surprise us. You love proving us wrong.”

“I love doing the right thing. It just so happens that the right thing ends up being exactly what you lot don’t want—it’s a win-win,” she shrugged. “But I didn’t fail the mission. He’s still alive, and that might annoy the bloodthirsty in the High Council, but the mission succeeded.”

“And how did you reach that conclusion?”

“The same way I made it happen. The same way you’re getting there and figuring it out. With words.”

“Words?”

The Doctor nodded. “You said he would grow up to be totally evil. A ruthless dictator who would destroy millions of lives when his people made first contact with a visiting race. You sent me there, intent on disposing of him from afar. But I spoke to him – I made first contact.”

Gat’s eyes widened, “What?”

“And we had a chat. He’s a nice kid. Don’t know what would’ve happened to send him down that path, but a good conversation works wonders.”

“You can’t know that.”

“Yes I can. I’ve got a little thing called a TARDIS, Gat. I jumped forwards to make sure. And, lo and behold, first contact went off without a hitch. Well, I suppose it’s ‘second contact’ now…”

“Doctor–”

“What? Don’t believe me? Check in with her and she’ll tell you the same. Although,” the Doctor leaned in to whisper, “she might not. You’re not her favourite, are you?” With a curt chuckle, she spun on her heels and strolled away.

“Doctor!” Gat shouted. “You won’t get away with this!”

“Already have, Gat,” the Doctor called back over her shoulder. “That’s time travel for you.”

DAY 9: "I LOVED YOU - HOW COULD I HAVE DONE THIS TO YOU"

Filling in the Blanks by ImpossibleGirl

The Doctor immediately felt a ton of pain when he woke up. As he stood up his body erupted in pain. He slowly made his way over to her.

"You okay?"

"It feels like I've broken a bone or two," she said. She had a few cuts on her face.

"I also feel like that. Is there a blank spot in your memory like a spot that doesn't exist?"

She didn't say anything for a few seconds. "There is. Don't know how we got here."

"Exactly. The last thing I remember is being rescued by a group of Tomirans and going with them somewhere."

She nodded. He wrapped his hands around her neck and his expression got softer.

"I thought we were keeping things professional when we're on adventures."

"There's always exceptions," he said before he kissed her, "Let's figure out what happened."

He stood up and helped her up. They walked for a bit without saying anything. The Doctor tried to make note of where they were.

They talked about how they might've gotten to this point but couldn't agree on what was the most likely option.

They came across a security room which they figured might be a good option to find out their movements. They walked to a desk with large monitors, a computer, a mouse, a keyboard and a device that had a bunch of buttons. He let go and she put one hand on the desk.

He got out his sonic and aimed it at the monitors. They turned on and a logo appeared with a loading bar. After a few seconds all the monitors had blue staticky screens with time stamps at the top left. They each had four different sections.

He made his way over to the keyboard and moved the mouse which made the computer

turn on. Soniced the computer to bypass the password, navigated to the camera folder and found a bunch of files that were saved by the hour. He selected one of them and all the monitor footages switched and began playing. He went through the same process until he found the right file.

The footage showed them being escorted to a room and one of the aliens flicked a switch. Red mist slowly filled the room which made it hard to breathe.

Their expressions changed to horror as they watched a fight break out. Hurting each other. Blood being spilled.

The alien flipped the switch and the mist slowly began filtering out. Items were scattered everywhere. There were small pools of blood on the ground. Both of them were on the ground.

They were too stunned to do anything. After what felt like ages the Doctor slowly reached towards the mouse to pause.

DAY 10: "I WOULD HAVE DONE ANYTHING"

by DukeFan

Sarah Jane heard someone plop down on the couch near her, knowing that it had to be Brendan as Aunt Lavinia was still out visiting friends. She didn't immediately look up from her file, figuring he would tell her what he wanted in his own time. She was looking for any clues in the file that would indicate what kind of aliens she was dealing with. They were aliens, she didn't doubt that for a moment. She just didn't know if she needed to intervene yet or not. After a few moments Brendan sighed and Sarah found herself smiling a little.

"Long day?" she asked. Brandon hummed.

"A bit. And you? How is the journalism coming along?" he asked. Sarah had thought she would get back into journalism now that she wasn't traveling with the Doctor anymore, not that she ever truly left it. Even when she worked with the Doctor and UNIT, she was still investigating and writing articles. She just couldn't publish many of them due to confidentiality. Some she still couldn't publish, but maybe if she put it as non-fiction she could?

"It's fine," she said. Brendan nodded.

"You seem really comfortable doing all this." She wondered when that became true, when she started investigating with the intention of finding aliens specifically. "Is it because of the times you travelled with the Doctor bloke?" he asked. Sarah thought about it for a moment before shaking her head.

"No, but he definitely didn't help." She laughed. Sarah Jane had always been inquisitive and impulsive. She met the Doctor by pretending to be Aunt Lavinia and infiltrating a group of scientists after all, but the Doctor was one of the first people who didn't try to change those traits in her. In fact, he encouraged them.

"What was he like?" Brendan asked. Sarah had mentioned the Doctor a few times but she hadn't spoken about him much, sometimes it just hurt too much.

"He's wonderful, like no one else on Earth," she said. Because he wasn't of Earth, like he reminded her so often. Brendan nodded, showing he was listening.

"The Master is not of Earth Mistress," K9 chirped up from beside the couch. Sarah chuckled at the metal dog, who had always been so literal. The Doctor had gifted K9 to her, probably because he knew she would never be able to walk away from this.

“Yes I know. It was an expression K9,” she corrected. Brendan laughed, still finding K9 fascinating.

“Did you enjoy your travels with him?” Brendan asked. Sarah thought about the dangers, the times where she thought the Doctor was dying, the times where she nearly died. She thought about the fear and danger they had been in.

“Sometimes. Sometimes I hated them,” she admitted. The day they had gone their separate ways she had said she wanted to go home. She hadn’t really meant it, had only wanted to prove a point to him that sometimes things were too much for humans, but he responded with taking her home. It wasn’t until later that she realized something else had been going on, something that the Doctor had been scared of. That he felt he couldn’t take her along to face.

“Would you travel with him again if you could?” Brendan asked.

“I would have done anything to keep travelling with him,” Sarah admitted. Because despite the danger, despite the pain it had all been worth it. “When you travel with the Doctor, when you see what’s really out there…” She tried to explain it but she really couldn’t. The Doctor made her feel better, that she could do things and make a difference. She had loved their travels, had loved the adventure, and loved that there was someone who encouraged her to be exactly who she was. “What about you K9?” she asked.

“Affirmative,” the dog chirped, ears whirling and buzzing as they moved in his excitement. Sarah Jane hadn’t known exactly what K9’s adventures were with the Doctor, they hadn’t travelled at the same time, but she knew K9 had fond memories of the Doctor. As fond of memories as a robot dog could have. "Travelling with the Master was agreeable,” K9 continued. Sarah nodded.

“You can say that again,” she said. And without even realizing it, Sarah had started to talk about some of the adventures they had. The Sontaran, the dinosaurs, giant spiders, far off lands, and terrible monsters. She told Brendan tales of kingdoms and planets, of androids and giant bugs. She talked about not only the Doctor but dear Harry, of the Brigadier and Benton among others at UNIT. One day, just maybe, she could do these things again. To be having adventures through space and maybe time.

DAY 11: EXPLOSION

by Mindfog

“I wish you wouldn't carry Nitro Nine everywhere we go Ace. You know I'm a pacifist by nature.”

The Doctor put his cup of tea down on the formica table top in front of him.

“Come off it, Professor! How many times has my Nitro Nine saved the day? And you cause as many explosions as I do, by sending computers into overload or tricking bad guys into blowing themselves up!”

The Doctor flapped his hand at her. “That's different. I always give them the option to give in first. They don't have to choose to 'blow themselves up' as you so eloquently put it.”

“But you know they won't take that option, don't you? So what's the difference?”

“The difference is that I don't actually pull the trigger. They do it themselves.”

Ace folded her arms in front of her. “If you know that they're going to spring a trap that you set, isn't that similar to me just setting a fuse and running away? They end up getting exploded either way.”

The Doctor tapped his tea spoon against the saucer. “We really should have a longer discussion about ethics some time. I hope to persuade you to not carry explosives in your backpack in future. But for now, we have to go.” He stood up.

“Where are we going, Professor?”

“I need to find out just what this Pelham fellow keeps in his safe. So you and I are about to break into it.” The Doctor ushered her out of the cafe and onto the street.

“And how are we going to do that Professor?” said Ace, grinning at him.

“You are going to hand me one of your cans of nitro nine and we're going to blow our way in.”

“I thought blowing things up wasn't the answer, Professor.” Ace was beaming widely now.

“Blowing things up is sometimes the answer, Ace. The thing about ethics is that... well

it's complicated."

Ace laughed and reached into her backpack.

DAY 12: FORCED TO CHOOSE

by DukeFan

Even after all the time he had been traveling with the Doctor and Sarah, Harry was still amazed at just how big the TARDIS was. The corridors to his room were long and twisted, and Harry was worried that one day he would get lost and never find his way back to the main room. Fortunately this time that wasn't a worry. Raised voices seemed to serve as a type of beacon, leading him to the Doctor and Sarah.

In almost no time at all, Harry found Sarah and the Doctor standing directly in front of each other in the middle of a heated conversation. He couldn't help but smile, fairly sure they weren't really angry at each other. The Doctor never seemed to be able to stay angry at Sarah for any amount of time, and even if Sarah wanted to be angry with the Doctor it was hard to fight with someone who wouldn't fight back. If they were going at it, then it was either something very wrong or something so tiny it was hardly worth noticing. "I say, what seems to be going on here?" Harry asked, announcing his presence. The two turned to look at him, then looked back to each other. Sly smiles formed on their faces and Harry realized whatever they had been going on about hadn't been anything bad.

"Good morning Harry." The Doctor said as Sarah practically pranced to his side, giving him a wide cheshire grin. Harry gave her a weary look.

"Excellent timing Harry." Sarah praised. Harry suddenly doubted that. It was likely terrible timing.

"Oh? And why is that?" Harry asked. Sarah glanced at the Doctor and Harry couldn't help but feel a little left out. The two had traveled together long before Harry came along, they practically had their own language at times that the TARDIS would never be able to translate for him. They had quite a few traits in common as well, a duo that Harry couldn't imagine anyone really breaking up. The Doctor turned a wide grin to Harry, all teeth.

"Why dear Harry, we need you to make a decision for us." The Doctor said in an almost sing-song voice. Harry cocked an eyebrow.

"Me?" he asked. Sarah nodded.

"We've been trying to figure out where to go next, but we honestly can't decide. So, we want you to choose." Sarah announced. Harry was surprised. They wanted him to pick their next location? That was such a strange opportunity to put in front of him. He could pick any time and any place in all of existence he wanted to go to? Harry knew

the TARDIS wasn't always the most reliable for decisions like that, the Doctor ended up where he wanted to go sometimes but almost as often, they ended up in some random place. Harry could put some thought into it and give the Doctor an actual destination he wanted to see, but there was a chance they would never get there. Or he could give a random place and they end up there, leaving Sarah and the Doctor to be bord. Harry didn't like that kind of responsibility.

"Why don't you decide old girl?" Harry asked Sarah. Sarah made a face, in response to the nickname or the question Harry didn't know.

"Oh no, we told you to choose, so you need to choose." She announced. So they were going to force him to make a choice. That was almost unfair.

"Doctor…" he started, turning to the Doctor. The wide grin that hadn't faded a bit was all the answer he got. The Doctor was enjoying this. Harry thought for a moment, trying to think of what to do.

"Are there rules to this?" he asked. He figured if he was going to choose a time and place, there may be rules of what he could choose.

"Oh yes!" the Doctor said happily. After a moment he still hadn't elaborated and Harry concluded he wasn't going to. Sarah didn't offer any suggestions either.

"I see." Harry muttered. He wished he had some idea of where he wanted to go, but it never occurred to him that the Doctor and Sarah would put the choice to him. He was tempted to just say 'the moon', because that was the destination that started all of this. The Doctor had planned to take him to the moon, simply to prove he could, then back to Harry's infirmary. Despite effectively proving that the TARDIS was a time and space machine, no one had ever mentioned returning to London anytime soon. Harry scratched both options from the list. He wasn't ready to return to UNIT yet. Not if that meant leaving the Doctor and Sarah. Sure, they could claim it was simply to visit but Harry didn't trust that he had the strength to get back in the TARDIS again if they returned home.

Did he want to go to the future? The past? Did he even want to stay on Earth? Harry didn't even know what was all out there. If he suggested something like Jupiter would the Doctor make fun of him for not having an imagination? If he choose somewhere boring would the Doctor and Sarah complain? If he picked someplace that turned out to be dangerous would he be called an idiot? Yet the excited looks on the Doctor's and Sarah's faces assured him that they genuinely cared about him. He supposed he could do this.

"Oh all right." He agreed. An idea occurred to him, one he doubted broke any of the rules the Doctor refused to explain. As he told the idea to the two, they nodded excitedly and Harry knew they were onto the next adventure.

DAY 13: "YOU THINK YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT ME?"

by DukeFan

The Brigadier sat at his desk, frowning a little as he looked around the office. It was so empty now. He felt like it always had been, not as full of pictures and gifts like some of his colleagues had been. A testament to how much he sacrificed in his career. A career that was almost at an end with his retirement in a few weeks time. The Brigadier, or rather Alistair as he knew he would soon be addressed as, felt some apprehension at his impending change. He had been raised by a father in the military, he had been in the military his entire adult life. Being a civilian was not something he knew how to do.

The Brigadier reached into a drawer under his desk, pulling out a bottle of whiskey and a glass he kept squirrelled away. It was late, he wasn't on duty, and even if it was breaking a few rules he was still a Brigadier General, no one would say much to him. He could still do a few drinks for his completed career in peace.

"I thought you were on duty," came a teasing voice. The Brigadier looked up at the doorway to see a younger man, probably in his thirties, leaning against the door frame. He was a skinny man, wearing a pinstripe suit under a large brown overcoat. He was grinning, his expression almost manic like catching a Brigadier bending a few alcohol rules had just made his year. Probably an investigator of some sort, just what he needed on his way out. The Brigadier cleared his throat.

"Not anymore. We completed for the day," he snapped. The young man nodded, shoving his hands deep into the pockets of his coat.

"I actually thought you were already retired, or I tried to go see you when you were already retired but things went a little wrong and I missed by a few years. Still, you're looking well," the man was saying. The Brigadier frowned, the words registering in his mind. There was only one being he knew who would talk to him in such an informal manner and speak of 'missing by a few years.' The last the Brigadier had seen him, he had curly brown hair and a scarf that dragged behind him. He heard rumors, stories of a younger man claiming to be the Doctor who wore a stick of celery on his lapel, and another who wore a coat of many colours, but this man didn't fit either description.

"Doctor?" the Brigadier asked. The manic glint in the man's eye left and his smile softened, into something almost fond.

"Hello Brigadier," he confirmed. The Brigadier smiled, reaching down into his drawer again to pull out a second glass. He set it on the desk before beckoning the Doctor to come join him. His long time friend obediently came into the room, sinking into the

chair across from the old officer. The Brigadier couldn't help but find his behavior odd, and he quickly looked the Doctor over. There was a heaviness to the man, a tiredness that was pronounced in how he walked, how he held himself. The Brigadier couldn't help but feel it didn't suit his old friend one bit.

"You've changed again," he noted. The Doctor's smile faded a little as he gave the Brigadier a slightly more serious look.

"A few times now," he admitted. The Brigadier wondered just how many times the Doctor could actually change like that. "It's been a long, long time," the Doctor said. The Brigadier knew it had been quite a few years for him since they last met, and he couldn't help but wonder how long it had been for the Doctor.

"Indeed it has. You're looking…" Should he say well? That's what people usually said after such long times in seeing each other, that they look well. Yet the Doctor didn't look well at all. The longer the Brigadier looked the more he saw. Sunken eyes, shadows in his face, pale skin. "Well, it's good to see you just the same Doctor," he said. He poured whiskey into the two glasses before picking up his and taking a large drink. The Doctor looked at the second one, staring at it intently. Now that he thought about it, the Brigadier wasn't sure if the Doctor really drank. He had seen him drink some wine on a few special occasions, and he toasted Jo's engagement to Cliff with champagne

"You too Brigadier." The Doctor seemed to decide that one sip wouldn't hurt as he picked up the glass left for him and took the tiniest of sips he could. His face scrunched up and the Brigadier tried not to burst out laughing at the look on his face. Alcohol or not, whiskey was not one of his drinks apparently. The Doctor gently put the drink back down, politely declining any more.

"So what brings you here? Surely not to visit an old friend." The Brigadier laughed. After all, the Doctor was a man who was always in motion. Visiting friends, saying goodbye, that wasn't something he did. To his surprise the Doctor's expression turned almost sad.

"That's exactly why I'm here," he said. That was rather shocking. In all their time working together, the Doctor had never come to visit just for the sake of visiting.

"I see. What happened Doctor?" he asked. The Doctor gave him a confused look. The Brigadier couldn't help but think about how this version of the Doctor was more expressive than the ones he knew.

"What?" he asked, sounding lost. The Brigadier smiled.

"This isn't like you at all, so something must have happened. What was it?" he asked. The Doctor's face suddenly darkened and the man looked absolutely livid.

"You think you know everything about me? You don't know a damn thing," he snarled.

Then he froze, his face turning to an expression of shock. Almost like he couldn't believe that just happened himself. The Doctor then sighed, leaning back in his chair. The Brigadier was stunned by how quickly his moods changed, and he couldn't help but recall that a few years ago he would have been furious, that they would have had a long vicious fight about it before making up in their own way. Maybe he really was getting too old for this anymore, because he didn't feel like fighting. "I'm sorry, I don't know where that came from," the Doctor muttered.

The Doctor had been right though, that the Brigadier hardly knew anything about the man. The Doctor had shown up in a battle zone, when the sewers were running rampant with yeti. He saved them, and then he was gone. Him, McCrimmon, and Victoria. Years later he showed up again, Victoria long gone and in her place a young woman named Zoe. The Brigadier had hardly known a thing about him, but he did know the Doctor knew what he was doing and could help with the strange mystery he had on his hands. After the Doctor vanished again, only to show up some time later in a new body and an explanation that he was in exile from his own people. And the Brigadier's response had been to offer him a job.

Everything he knew about the Doctor practically came from the man himself. He hadn't had any confirmation that Time Lords were even real until the Master showed up on their doorstep practically a year after the Doctor came to work for him. So many things about the Doctor were things the Brigadier had taken on faith, and the Doctor never let him down. Had always come through for him and never once gave the Brigadier reason to doubt that faith.

The Doctor had been old when they met, Sarah had once told him that the Doctor had told her he was over 700 years old. There was no telling how much time had passed on the Doctor's end, how many years had passed and what experiences he had been through since their last meeting. The man in front of him was older than many countries that currently existed on Earth, he had experiences that the Brigadier couldn't even imagine.

"I'm assuming it came from the same source that led you to come visit me," the Brigadier offered. The Doctor nodded.

"Probably. I've been visiting a few others too. Saw Liz, Jo, Sarah Jane, Mike, even Benton. I actually just left Benton's car lot actually." He said. The Brigadier blinked.

"His what?" he asked. Benton didn't have a car lot, he was a Regimental Sergeant Major here in UNIT. He wasn't in at the moment, he was off on a job with Olive Hawthorne investigating a strange occurrence in the countryside. The Doctor looked a little sheepish for a moment.

"Sorry, spoilers." He said. The Brigadier nodded, taking another drink from his glass. "There was an accident. I'm on a sort of journey at the moment. Can't drag this out much longer though. There's a few more people I need to see. Then things are going to

change again, and I'm not ready, not really," he said. The Brigadier nodded to show he understood. He wasn't sure what exactly what was going on with the Doctor, but one thing he did understand was that some major part of the Doctor's life was closing, and that he was on an uncertain precipitous.

"Well, I'm honoured that of all the times and places you could have chosen me, it was still when I was a Brigadier of UNIT," he noted. The Doctor gave him a weary smile in response and the Brigadier lifted his glass, toasting both of their fascinating lives and wishing them good fortune on this next chapter.

DAY 14: DANCING

by DukeFan

Mike sipped his hot chocolate, listening to Jo ramble on about her most recent adventure with the Doctor. He smiled, nodding along even though he didn't fully understand some of the explanation. Jo's explanations were always so excited that sometimes she spoke hurriedly, Mike's brain skipping over words to keep up, and she used a lot of technical terms that Mike couldn't understand. He wondered, not for the first time, if those words were from the Doctor themself and that Jo didn't fully understand it either but was too proud to say it.

It was an almost pleasant evening. It was a little late and Mike had sent the lads home a few hours ago. He had stayed to finish a few papers and had just polished them off before Jo came waltzing in to tell him all about her latest adventure. He had gathered that the Brigadier was in the lab with the Doctor, leaving only the four of them in the Headquarters. Everyone else in UNIT was probably out on the town, enjoying their Friday night. Jo paused to take another deep breath before continuing her story when they heard a noise from the main room where all the lad's desks were.

Mike and Jo exchanged confused looks before both getting up and heading to the doorway. A quick glance around the room allowed Mike to catch the source. It was a man in a three piece suit, rummaging through Benton's desk. Mike opened his mouth to yell at the man, to say it was a restricted area and demand for the man's credentials, but before he could a giggle escaped Jo's mouth. Mike glanced at her for a moment before looking back at the man and he realized exactly what Jo found so amusing.

Mike had almost exclusively seen Benton wearing his tan UNIT uniform. The few times he had seen the sergeant out of uniform, he had almost always worn a blue windbreaker. Mike thought that was the reason it took him so long to recognize Benton wearing a suit. It was never something he thought he would see. It was so different, so out of place, that Mike couldn't help but laugh. His laughing set Jo off and the two nearly fell over from their amusement. Benton jerked up straight when he heard the noise, turning quickly to face them. His expression went from surprise to embarrassment, looking away. That sobered Mike up a bit, causing both him and Jo to calm down. They didn't mean to make him feel bad, it had just been so unexpected.

"Oh Sergeant Benton, you look so handsome!" said Jo with a smile. Benton gave an almost hesitant smile.

"Where are you headed tonight dressed like that?" Mike asked. Benton winced, like he was almost embarrassed by it.

"I promised Charlotte to escort her to a ball dancing event tonight," he said. Mike ran

the name through his head, wondering who Charlotte was. He was sure he heard the name before. Jo seemed to have no such trouble remembering.

"Oh that's wonderful Sergeant! You have been practising so hard for this, I didn't realize it was tonight!" she said. Mike glanced between them as Benton gave a small nod.

"Yeah, I forgot the invitation in my desk," he admitted. So that was why he came in, he needed to get the invitation for him and this Charlotte. Mike recalled Benton had mentioned ballroom dancing once or twice before, hadn't realized it was such an important part of his life outside of UNIT.

"Oh! Let me help you!" Jo said, quickly moving over and looking through the papers. Mike didn't want to just stand by and quickly jumped to help. He was shifting through a stack of papers when he saw an extravagant ticket for a dance event, addressed to Charlotte Benton and guest. That was right, Charlotte was Benton's little sister! Mike felt a little embarrassed for forgetting and grateful he hadn't asked.

"Found it," he announced, holding it up. Benton looked at him in relief before taking the ticket.

"Thank you Sir. Charlotte would have had my head," he said, putting it in his pocket. Jo quickly gave him a hug.

"Good luck Sergeant," she said. Benton nodded before heading out almost at a jog. Mike shook his head, fondly. "He's been working so hard for this you know. It means a lot to his sister, not that we understand why," Jo said. Mike nodded. "I'm sure they will have a great time," Jo added. Mike glanced at her, seeing Jo's eyes were still on the door Benton went out. He wondered if Jo wanted to dance. She never said anything like it, but it was possible.

Mike went into his office, Jo making a noise of confusion as she followed. He easily found the radio behind his desk, a radio he turned on when he was having a stressful day and used the noise to help ground him. Switching it on, he turned through the stations until he found one that he could dance to, then he turned to Jo and held out a hand. Jo looked surprised for a moment before she smiled and accepted the hand. The office wasn't too big, but big enough for a small dance with the two of them. Jo was smiling and Mike couldn't help but think there was something to this dancing thing.

DAY 15: STAR-SAILING

Worth It by Kalira

"Cleo! Cleo, come here!"

Cleo groaned, rubbing her face with one hand and contemplating whether she might have to *pry* her eyelids open. Another rub and she was reminded that she hadn't taken off her makeup before she zonked out either, and the mascara had not been improved by however long she had actually managed to sleep before–

"Cleo!"

It was bright with excitement rather than tight with alarm, so Cleo let herself grumble and pick at her gummy mascara and sit up slowly. The Doctor was right in her face when she opened her eyes properly, but Cleo didn't jump, because she was *always* doing that.

Cleo smiled slightly despite herself, because she'd gotten really *fond* of the Doctor for that and so many other things. And anyway, when she was grinning and bouncing like this it was difficult not to smile at her.

"Come on, I want to show you something!" the Doctor urged, and Cleo eyed her.

Not *that* fond. "Babes, there had better be, like, diamonds encrusted on whatever this is. I want to sleep for a week." she said, but the Doctor was already rushing away again. "I *need* to sleep for a week. Maybe two weeks; a light coma sounds super refreshing right now." she added in a mutter, but looked after the Doctor all the same.

Cleo considered strongly for another few moments – fuck, she had been so tired she'd fallen asleep on the couch in the cosy room the TARDIS had... budded or whatever just off the console room a few days after Cleo came on board, short of even the energy to get to her own bed. Or the bath. She wrinkled her nose and got up, stretching and feeling like she was, like, a hundred years old, and hobbled into the console room.

"Here!" the Doctor beckoned from the doors, and Cleo sighed.

"Look babes, I love you, but in the past month the absolute top thing I have learned is that any supposition disaster follows you around is flawed *only* in that you don't actually *make* it. Causation versus correlation." Cleo flicked her fingers. "But I do *not* have the energy for another crisis right now. I am *not* stepping out there."

"We haven't landed any 'there' to step!" the Doctor shook her head, and Cleo cocked

her own, curious. "Here; look!"

She swung the doors open, and Cleo caught at her arm for balance - not because the TARDIS was unsteady, at least not *right now*, or anything, only...

Her mouth dropped open, eyes wide. "Oh."

"We've been running around so much," the Doctor laughed a little, "checking on all my old friends, all the worlds that might've been affected, never having time to stop, but..."

"Oh." Cleo said again, taking a cautious step closer.

"I thought you might like to see what's out there," the Doctor said, squeezing her hand.

Cleo nodded, taking another step. Then she hesitated, dragging her gaze away to look at the Doctor, catching her hand. "Is it– I mean," she gestured, "should I... stay back or something?"

"Oh, she won't let you fall or anything like that!" the Doctor said brightly, bumping gently into Cleo's side. "And she keeps us safe in here. Even with the doors open." she added, reaching out to brush her fingers affectionately along one side of the door frame, stepping right up to the open space. Cleo moved with her, leaning into her side, and just... stared at the view.

"It's not covered in diamonds, I'm afraid," the Doctor said lightly, teasing.

Cleo laughed. "Oh god. This is so much better." She pointed, careful to keep her hand inside the TARDIS, because that was *fucking* ***space*** out there. "And that looks like diamonds."

"The fragments of a lost star, lighting up the sky for the worlds below," the Doctor said softly. Cleo's breath hitched, and the Doctor nudged into her. "They're all safe. The worlds, the people there. The star exploded a million years before their ancestors began to breathe; they built up beneath a wash of light and never knew anything else – not until they stepped into it themselves and began to really fly in space. That's still a thousand years off or so, though, now. If I've got the numbers right." she added, barely audible.

"It's gorgeous," Cleo said quietly, watching the slow wheeling of the fragments of star or whatever it was, the colour washed through it like waves. The glow of the star, or sun, or whatever it was, behind...The planets, all four of them in sight, covered in– "There's people down there? Like, we could go see them?"

"I thought you wanted a bath and a week of sleep," the Doctor said, and Cleo considered carefully, then stuck her tongue out. The Doctor laughed. "Yes, there's people down there, *so* many people and stories and lives, and yes, we can go and see if you want. It's

halfway through their summer cycle, in one of the dark phases – the 'day' and 'night' last about twenty days each there, but the star-fragments never dim – and if I remember rightly, they've got the most amazing festivals, especially along the seas. And competitions racing out over the sea! If you go far enough it's like being up here, between water and stars and light."

Cleo licked her lips. "Yeah. Yeah I want to go down." She paused. "I do want a bath though. And if we're not going to an *emergency*... what do you *wear* to..."

"Take a bath," the Doctor said, and hugged her, "when you're done looking at this view," she added with a grin, "and then have a nap, and the old girl will find you something to wear for star-sailing. Planet-style!" she added quickly, as though clarifying. Cleo wanted to ask what other kinds there were, but... later.

Cleo hesitated, putting a hand on one of the open doors. "And this..."

"It's beautiful, isn't it?" the Doctor said, leaning against the other.

"It's... *amazing*." Cleo agreed, suddenly so, so glad she'd come, that the Doctor had welcomed her into the TARDIS. She hadn't regretted it – even in all the running and the *disasters* and the exhaustion – but every so often something happened, something *more*, and she just thought...

The *things* she'd seen, *would* see, with the Doctor, that she never could have *imagined* otherwise.

"Thank you," Cleo said quietly, looking at the Doctor and for just a breath understanding that irrepressible, broad smile and the light in her eyes.

She got both now, and the Doctor squeezed her shoulder. "Thank you, for coming with me. And letting me see it all again through your eyes."

DAY 16: TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT

a constant game of falling short by ProfessorSummerfield

Leela's fingers dig hard into Veklin's arm as she yanks her away from the doorway and backs her against the wall. The training room has emptied out now, all the soldiers vanished, either summoned by their commanders or had the good sense to leave when they saw Leela giving Veklin that look.

“I am not stupid, Veklin,” says Leela, sharp as ever.

Veklin bristles, unsettled, but attempting her usual condescending sneer. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.” Her eyes dart around the room and up at Leela, considering her options. Leela is strong and Veklin doubts that she would let her leave without a fight. And a fight is not what Veklin wants right now. What she wants is to get the human to shut up and let her get back to her duties, especially if she is talking about what Veklin thinks she is. Ollistra will *not* be pleased.

“I don’t have time for your games, Leela,” continues Veklin, affecting a bored tone as she pulls away from Leela, “So if–”

Leela grabs Veklin's wrist, stopping her dead.

“When Romana, Narvin and I were searching for another Gallifrey to make our home after the dogma virus, we came across a Gallifrey that had been fighting a war for a very long time. The Gallifreyans there were called True Lords, and their enemy was ancient and evil. They had created a transduction barrier around the whole planet to hide the sun, as it was deadly to them.”

Leela's eyes are fixed on Veklin's. Veklin scoffs. “Yes, very interesting I'm sure, but I really–”

“They were known as Vampires,” Leela interrupts. “And I have never forgotten their scent.”

Leela's single heart thuds loudly in Veklin's head, deafening in the emptiness of the room. Her fingers burn as they grip her arms, each beat of her pulse vivid against her cold skin. Veklin swallows, mouth dry. Her Cardinal's warnings ever present at the back of her mind is enough to push down the hunger. For now. Leela’s gaze has not broken. Her mouth has twisted into the beginnings of a smile. The smile of a hunter closing in on her prey.

But Veklin will not be so easily subdued.

Quickly, too quickly, she wrestles free and knocks Leela down, her fist meeting Leela's stomach hard with a growl. Her nails draw red streaks down Leela's skin. The look on her face however is not one of anger. It is one of a hunter knowing her trap has been sprung and the prey is caught.

“I have never seen a Time Lord move that fast,” says Leela, in between ragged breaths. “And you–” their faces are inches away now– “have no pulse.”

Veklin falters, then drags her up against the wall by the front of her shirt. She's made a mistake. She should have seen it coming. Leela was already suspicious, and now she has her proof. Dread wells up inside, tangled with icy fear. Leela is *nothing*. And yet, now she holds the control to Veklin's collar.

No.

Her mistress will protect her. She's too valuable to her. She knows that. She has to believe it.

“What do *you* know about Time Lords, *savage*?” hisses Veklin, every muscle tensed.

Leela forces Veklin's hands down but doesn't shove her away, instead leaning down to murmur in her ear.

“Ah. But you are *not* a Time Lord, are you?”

Before Veklin has time to respond, with insults or violence or denial, Leela has gone, leaving the soldier alone with her whirring thoughts.

How could you let yourself be tricked by her?

DAY 17: "DON'T ASK QUESTIONS YOU DON'T WANT THE ANSWERS TO"

by DukeFan

Sergeant Osgood shook his head as he watched young Kate rift threw a stack of papers. They weren't important documents, and if it kept the child busy for a few minutes he didn't mind it. It wasn't very often someone, let alone the Brigadier, had to bring their children into the office; and usually when the Brigadier did Kate would be with Sergeant Benton for the day while he was engaged in other activities. Unfortunately the good sergeant was away, handling some investigation for UNIT. Since Sergeant Osgood had a young niece of his own, Nova, and his sister in law was pregnant with a second, he was asked to watch Kate for a little bit. He had experience with children after all.

Osgood didn't think he was the best suited person for the job, but since the alternatives were people Osgood wouldn't trust with the majority of his communications equipment, he defiantly wouldn't trust them with a child. No matter how mature for her age Kate was.

The Brigadier had been very clear that he didn't want to risk Kate learning too much about UNIT and what they did. UNIT was a secret organization to begin with, but on a more personal note the Brigadier didn't like the idea of Kate following him into the military. Like many parents Osgood knew, he wanted more for his daughter than what he had. Osgood understood that, he wanted more for his own niece and the one on the way then a sergeant's pay.

"What is this about?" Kate asked, holding up a paper. Osgood frowned, taking it from her and looking it over. It was a request form for new radios for one of the squads.

"Nothing important," he dismissed, putting it aside into his 'complete' pile. He already had the documentation from the squad that they received the equipment and were completing the training on it anyway. Kate nodded and held up a new paper.

"And this?" she asked. Osgood took that paper from her as well.

"Nothing important," he repeated, noting it was a memo to attend a meeting that occurred over a week ago. He tossed that one in the bin for burning. Kate nodded again and went back to the stack of papers. Osgood almost expected her to pick out another paper to ask him about.

"What do you do?" Kate asked after a few moments. Osgood smiled.

"I'm a technical specialist. I work on the radio equipment mostly," he admitted. Osgood

was very good at his job, despite what the Doctor may say. It wasn't his fault the Doctor was so different with electronics and equipment than him.

"And Sergeant Benton is the senior non-commissioned officer?" she asked. He nodded. While technically not, as he didn't have the longest time in the rank of sergeant, Benton had become the Brigadier's most trusted NCO and filled the role just fine. Osgood liked the fellow sergeant, found him a rather trustworthy and dependable lad.

"And the current Executive officer is…" Osgood frowned, realizing Kate wasn't just asking random questions but rather formulating in her own mind how things worked at UNIT. Who was who, who did what, putting together some sort of picture. His expression must have shown some of his thoughts because Kate seemed to decide another question.

"What does my dad do?" she asked.

"You shouldn't ask questions you don't want to know the answers to," he muttered. Kate gave him an almost indignant look.

"I want to know," she insisted. He knew she very likely did. She wanted to know her father better, know what he did and what he was like. The Brigadier was the one who didn't want her to know, and honestly neither did Osgood. Also, she may think she wants to know now but if she ever learned the truth would she still think that? That aliens were real and threatened the Earth? That there were creatures who predated humanity that originally owned the planet and slept beneath the surface? Many adults wouldn't be able to handle that knowledge let alone a child. Osgood wasn't sure exactly how old Kate was, but judging by her size it was still single digits. Maybe six or seven.

"Maybe when you're older," he said. Kate's expression told him exactly what she thought of that question. Glancing at the clock, Osgood almost felt relief. "Are you hungry? It's about lunch time," he proposed. Kate gave a small nod, putting what was left of the papers down. The two of them headed toward the canteen. Osgood wondered about taking her to the Doctor and Sarah Jane for the rest of the day before deciding that may not be a great idea. He would just have to resolve himself to watching over her until the Brigadier completed his tasks. There defiantly were worse alternatives after all.

DAY 18: DOPPELGÄNGERS/CLONES

by DukeFan

"How is that head of yours today Mister Benton?" Mister Sullivan asked, approaching Benton and sitting in the chair beside him. Benton tried not to bristle, after all the good Lieutenant was the main thing keeping him in this bed. A few times now Benton had been able to just get up and leave but Harry Sullivan was not a medic who let patients wonder off, even less so after his time with the Doctor. He wasn't about to let Benton leave the infirmary until he personally cleared the Warrant Officer for duty.

"I keep telling you Sir, it's just a scratch. I'm perfectly fit to return to duty," Benton said. That wasn't exactly true. He had taken a hard hit to the head, a blow that the android had been confident would have killed him and dumped into a closet. He had spent the last two days under observation, which was starting to get on his nerves. Benton didn't like to stay in one place for too long, made him feel caged. "More my pride damaged than anything," Benton further admitted. He had been so easily lured out and left in a closet needing rescue. Mister Sullivan tensed for a moment before giving a small nod.

"I understand that." Benton recalled how the Lieutenant had been overwhelmed by the androids and tied up on the rocket. Miss Smith had found him and managed to free him, which had also dented his pride. After all the Doctor had asked him for help, and he was captured seconds after.

Benton was rather glad the Brigadier was out at the moment. It was bad enough the Doctor and Miss Smith knew what happened to him, checking on him after he was found before they flitted off into the world, but he really didn't want the Brigadier to know how easily they got fooled by the duplicates. "I thought Charlotte was never going to forgive me. I just told her not to be late since she usually is, only to never show myself. Couldn't exactly explain I was hit from a machine wearing my face and stuffed in a closet so I just said I got held up at work for a few days," Benton admitted. Mister Sullivan gave him a sympathetic look. "Not really sure what all that was about," Benton admitted. They had never been given a satisfactory explanation on what happened. The medic sighed.

"I'm not overly sure myself. Something about an alien invasion using androids that looked exactly like us," he mused. Benton nodded. As far as explanations from the Doctor went, that was fairly par for the course. Thoughts about his duplicate went through his mind. The double looked just like him, but didn't act like him. Miss Smith had explained it as 'nasty twins', which Benton thought was a very accurate view of them.

"At least they are gone. And hopefully for good," Benton muttered. Mister Sullivan gave him a crooked grin, clearly agreeing. "You didn't leave with them, Sir? I mean the Doc

and Miss Smith?" Benton asked, curious. The Doctor had actually invited Benton a few times over the years to come along for an adventure, and many times Benton had been very tempted. Miss Grant and Miss Smith both told the most amazing stories but Benton was quite happy where he was. Mister Sullivan sighed.

"I thought about it but…well if I ran off with the Doctor then who would be here to make sure you stayed in your sick bed?" There was a teasing note to his voice and Benton huffed, partially in annoyance. "Besides, the doubles are gone and the danger has passed." That was true. "Now, I want to take another look at that head of yours Mister Benton. I know you think you have a rather thick skull but even you can get hurt." Benton resigned himself to another examination

DAY 19: FORCED TO FIGHT

by Mindfog

“I abhor violence and never carry weapons and nor should you. So no Janus thorns, OK?”

Leela stared back at the Doctor. “I don't believe you, old man. I see the violence in your eyes.”

The Doctor's mind cast itself back. He was standing over the cave man, with a rock held high above his head. He was about to dash the man's brains out when that blasted Chesterfield stopped him. He'd been overtaken by the strongest urge to kill and it was only the actions of his companion that had stopped him.

Leela was still staring. Back the Doctor's mind went again to his actions on Skaro, when he implanted an army of Daleks with the Human Factor. He'd started a vast civil war which he'd genuinely thought was going to be the final end of the Dalek race. Of course, they'd survived, but at the time...

One of Leela's eyebrows was raised. The Doctor thought of the raid on Auderly House. He shot an Ogron with a disintegrator blaster. He'd shot the ape creature in the back. Why? To protect the delegates? Or had he done it because he'd wanted to?

The Doctor thought before he spoke. “There have been times when I have behaved like a savage. Sometimes I've been forced to fight because there was no other option. Sometimes, to my shame, I've given into the darker, more violent impulses and I haven't lived up to the ideal of non violent action. But that's no excuse to not try to be better next. time. I do abhor violence, especially when I've sunk to that level, so I always try to look for a peaceful solution. So, please, no Janus thorns, no knife. Let's try to be better than our basest instincts.”

Leela thought for a moment. “I will sheath my knife, old man, but it stays with me. You think with your head. That may work for you, but I live by my instincts and I always have. I will not apologise for that. I will try your way, but I will keep my weapons ready in case I need them. I am a warrior. That is who I am.”

The Doctor nodded. “Very well, savage. I can't ask for more than that. Just try not to kill the next person we meet, OK?”

“I will make no promises, Doctor, but I will try.”

“Fair enough,” said the Doctor, as he opened the TARDIS doors.

DAY 20: FIRST KISS

It's About Time by Rowana Farrin

The sky was cloudy, the air smelled like rain, and Ian Chesterton was far too giddy to care. They were home! He'd missed London, it's busy streets, noisy people, and yes, even the rain. It was so good to be back. Traveling with the Doctor in his Tardis had shown him wonders he could never have imagined, but it wasn't the same as good old England in the 1960s. He was glad for the experience, even if it hadn't been by choice, and he would miss the Doctor, Susan, and Vicki dearly. Yet, he didn't regret his choice to return when the opportunity presented. Even after all they had been through, this was still his home.

He wasn't alone in that either. Barbara Wright, his fellow teacher and perhaps more, was beaming at everything. They had stopped at a park on the way to figuring out what to do next. They did have to find a place to stay, since their flats were long evicted, and there was the business of trying to explain where they had been the past two years. Still, compared to everything with Daleks, French revolutionaries and more, it seemed such a small thing to worry about.

Ian watched Barbara as she relaxed and marveled at both the new and familiar. Maybe it was the excitement of finally coming home or maybe he had finally realized there was no need to hold back. He felt elated in his heart and suddenly struck with an idea that wouldn't let go. It was both impulsive and something he had been dreaming for far too long.

He took Barbara by the hand and spun her around. Barbara laughed, her eyes shining with happiness. "Ian! What are you…"

She was brought up short as Ian leaned forward and gently kissed her on the lips. They both froze for a moment, staring at each other. In all their travels, Ian had never dared be so bold and he was suddenly afraid he had overstepped. He started to pull away, but Barbara grabbed his coat collar and pulled him in for another, deeper kiss.

When they finally pulled apart, Ian was grinning like a cat who stole the cream. "I, uh, take it that was alright?" he ventured.

She regarded him with warm, happy smile. "It's about time. I was beginning to think you weren't interested."

Ian looked aghast at the very thought and shook his head quickly. "It just… never seemed to be the right time," he admitted. "What with all the running and danger. And we didn't know when we might get back. I didn't want to pressure you."

Barbara gave him a playful shove at his shoulder. “I would think you'd know by now that I am perfectly capable of making up my own mind on things, Ian Chesterton.”

Well, that sounded like confirmation if ever he'd heard it. Ian felt himself grinning again. “Hey, there's an idea! We could tell everyone we eloped!”

Barbara glared at him, clearly not nearly as amused. “I'd like to hear you explain that to my mother.”

Ian's enthusiasm wilted noticeably and he shuddered. “I think I'd rather face the Daleks again.”

Barbara rolled her eyes. “Well, we better think of something to tell them.” Then she paused, her expression frozen and she turned to stare at him again. “Wait a moment… did you just ask me to marry you?”

Ian put on a show of thinking hard about it for a long moment. “Did I? Why yes, I believe I did!” He beamed at her hopefully.

Barbara looked torn between annoyance and amusement, which made it impossible to tell what she was thinking in that moment. “As proposals go, it was rather lacking,” she pointed out with a thoughtful hum.

Oh, Ian could not refuse a challenge like that! He took Barbara by the hands and swung her around again until they were both laughing with delight. Then he got down properly on one knee, his eyes shining with all the love and joy he felt in his heart. “Barbara Wright, I have searched all of time and space and I have found no one more brilliant or more beautiful than you. Will you do me the honour of marrying me?”

Barbara made a show of thinking about it, but not for long. She was grinning as she pulled him to his feet and kissed him again. “Is that a yes?” he asked hopefully.

She laughed. “Yes, Ian, you impossible man. That's a yes.”

DAY 21: LEFT FOR DEAD

Counting Stars by Take414

His fingers curled around the long grass. It wrapped around his hand, forming a loose bandage, covering the wound. And yet the blood still leaked out, rushing out like a river that refused to dry despite the drought of death. His death.

He had always survived. For centuries, longer than most creatures in this vast, vast universe. And yet it seemed like just a fraction compared to his own species. His old friends from the Academy had lived for millennia by the end of the War – although of course nobody had been counting by that point. They had all been through far too much: alternate timelines, regenerations, accelerated aging. But he was sure that he was far younger than they would have been, if they were here now.

He needed to live. He knew that as surely as he knew his own childhood, as he knew that time was still flowing uninterrupted, as he knew that both his hearts were still beating.

And yet the crushing force gripping his chest grew, like a Dybbuk gripping one of his hearts until it gave out. The intensity rose and rose, and in his mind he could imagine the creature sitting on his chest, preventing him from sitting up, driven by a determination to bring him with it to the afterlife beyond. If it had its way, he would die here, alone.

Exhausted with the effort of getting up, he collapsed, lying back. He could see the stars, bright pieces of light poking through the funeral shroud of the night sky. They bathed him in a celestial light, one that could not heal his grievous wounds, but cured his mortal soul. For a moment, he could pretend that he was once more out there, among the white dots, visiting them once more. Pretending that he never had to leave.

He could name each and every one of those stars. Aldhibah – a beautiful draconic race lived in that system. Wonderful parties. Amadioha (never get in a legal battle with their people). Morava – he could remember just how beautiful the rivers were on its planets. Absolutely sublime.

He died thirteen minutes later, still counting the stars.

DAY 22: TIMELOOPS

by Mindfog

"Och Doctor! That food machine is broken again." Jamie bashed it with his fist. The machine made a groaning noise and then shut down in protest.

"You might find that it works better if you don't keep bashing it, Jamie!" Zoe piped up. "This isn't the way to get us breakfast."

"Don't bother me now, you two! Can't you see I'm busy?" The Doctor flapped his handkerchief at some smoke rising from the console. "Why don't you go to the TARDIS kitchen and see what you can find there?"

"I didnae know you had a proper kitchen," said Jamie. "All this time I've been eating the bars this thing comes out with." He gave the machine a prod with his foot.

"Well now you do, Jamie. Go down the corridor there and follow your noses. I'm going to be rather busy here. I really shouldn't have tried to bypass the fluid links." The Doctor blew on the smoking part of the console.

"Come on, Jamie. I'm sure we'll find something edible in the kitchen," Zoe said as she grabbed Jamie's hand and steered him into the TARDIS corridor.

The kitchen took a little finding, but they came across it after opening half a dozen doors to rooms that they'd never come across before. Who knew that the TARDIS had a cricket changing room? Once they entered the kitchen, Jamie began rummaging through the cupboards.

"There's some bowls here," he said. "This one's got a load of packets in it."

Zoe opened the cupboard with food boxes in it. "It looks like cereal will be the easiest option. Which do you prefer, Jamie? Space Krispies or Timeloops?"

"I'll try the timeloops." he said.

Zoe poured the cereal into two different bowls and added milk. "Do you think the Doctor will want any?"

"No. That one rarely eats. I swear he lives on photosynthesis."

"Gosh Jamie, look at you, using scientific terms!"

"Well maybe I've picked up a thing or two spending so much time with you, eh?"

Zoe smiled. They ate their timeloops in contented silence.

DAY 23: CUDDLING

heart to (singed) hearts by freckles_a_constellation

Once Martha is done with her goodbyes to the crew of the Pentallian and steps into the TARDIS, the anguish plainly visible on the Doctor's face makes her breath catch. Literally enough for him to hear the hitch in her breathing pattern and realise he's being watched. Unsurprisingly, the newfound awareness of having an audience prompts him to try to cover up his pain.

It's a clumsy attempt at best. Martha doubts the smile he puts on would even fool someone who doesn't know him. She happens to know him very well and as such has no intentions of letting it go.

“Doctor. Please talk to me,” she keeps her voice low, gentle, but she knows he'll hear the undercurrent of steel in it, realise she's no more backing down from this than she did on New Earth.

“What is there to talk about?” the Doctor asks, and it would be much more infuriating if he wasn't looking down at the grating, mask of nonchalance cracking as soon as he puts it on.

The Doctor's defences aren't impenetrable, definitely not right now, perhaps not ever. He just needs some encouragement. And so Martha changes tack. Steps in closer to the Doctor. Waits just a moment to give him a chance to back away. Wraps her arms around him when he doesn't.

It's a slow hug, not like their adrenaline fuelled celebratory ones, when he lifts her off the ground and she clings on, jumped up on the high of them both still being alive and largely unharmed. No, this is an embrace optimised to last. It doesn't take the Doctor long to start relaxing into it. He does so incrementally, but that's alright. Martha is in no rush.

His exhale is shaky where it ruffles her hair. Martha snuggles closer.

“I almost killed you,” the Doctor whispers. “I almost killed you and here you are, holding me.” His incredulity doesn't cover up how broken he sounds.

“You saved my life. You only came so near to that sun because you were saving my life. And as long as you still had control over your actions, you fought not to hurt anyone,” Martha says it evenly, sure.

“But I should have had control over my actions the whole time! I'm a Time Lord, I

should–" he chokes up and Martha takes the opportunity to step in.

"It was a sentient sun, Doctor. How many Time Lords did you know who've successfully fought off a sentient sun?"

"I– none, but I've never heard of a sun possessing anyone, before. Maybe it wasn't possible to expel it, but I could, I should have at least held out longer, if only I wasn't so weak–"

Hearing the Doctor call himself that, when he's the strongest person she has ever known, snaps something within Martha, and glad as she is that he is willing to voice his vulnerability, she can't stand to listen to him putting himself down any longer.

"Doctor, you aren't weak."

He tries to draw away at that, but Martha just holds on tighter.

"You don't know me well enough yet, if you truly think that." He sounds bitter, but way too resigned for the comment to actually be cutting.

"What I think is that you don't see yourself clearly."

The assertion has the Doctor making a noise of protest, but a light, reassuring squeeze is all it takes for him to melt right back into her embrace, so Martha continues.

"Oh I know you're not perfect, or infallible, or even unreachably above a human being. But you're not weak, either. And you're not bad, or unworthy, or a destructive force. You're a person. The world isn't yours to carry. You aren't responsible for anyone's choices other than yours. And you don't owe anyone anything more than your best.

"I won't deny that you're a trouble magnet, but you do more good than harm and you always, always try. I knew exactly what I was signing up for when I decided to travel with you and I came along again and again because it's worth it. You make it worth it. Do you understand?"

By the end of her impromptu speech, Martha's heart is hammering in her chest at what feels like thrice a healthy speed, because it's a love confession more damning than if she'd just said those three words that deep down she knows he wouldn't say back. But with their bodies pressed flush against each other as they are, she could feel his double heartbeat similarly picking up speed and his silent tears dripping into her hair, and god damn it he is worth it, he's worth this just being about him.

This also being by far the longest Martha has ever spent hugging someone. She's cuddled and snuggled up to people for longer, but that was sitting down comfortably or lying in bed, never standing and embracing like they're still doing right now. She's never even considered the possibility of an upright cuddle before. It should be unspeakably

awkward. And admittedly, standing still for so long after running all around the Pentallian isn't the most comfortable position Martha could imagine. Yet she doesn't want it to end.

Besides, she was determined not to be the first to let go from the moment she initiated the hug. Oh, part of her wishes she could see his face during this conversation. But Martha knows there's only so much vulnerability the Doctor can take and that would push it over the limit.

“Thank you,” he whispers. His voice only shakes a little bit.

Martha hopes that one day he might believe her, not just be grateful. She's willing to keep finding ways to say it as long as he needs her to, and then some.

The Doctor gives Martha one last squeeze before disengaging from the hug and stepping back to his usual bubble of personal space. She lets him.

“So! Think I'll take a shower now, that space suit was all rubbery and– eugh. I can still smell it. And then, well, I suppose you'll be needing rest, but after, we can go somewhere nice and chilly. Perhaps the snowy mountains of Marinius?”

That's when Martha notices something.

“Doctor.”

“Right, maybe not. Didn't like those locals anyways. How about the south pole of Alderso?” He could go on listing options forever, Martha knows.

“Doctor!” It's sharper this time.

“What?”

“You're trembling.”

“Oh. That would be from the pain, probably,” he says it offhandedly, like he doesn't see why it would be concerning. He probably really doesn't, is the worst thing.

Noticing Martha's incredulous expression, the Doctor hastens to clarify, “Nothing I couldn't fix with a quick trip to the medbay! I should probably do that before having a shower. And I was so looking forward to that shower.” His tone turns mournful towards the end, sounding rather like a naughty kid coming to terms with withheld dessert being the punishment for their actions.

Martha calls on her sturdiest reservoirs of patience.

“I'm coming with you,” she declares.

“To take a shower?” the Doctor practically squeaks.

Martha rolls her eyes. Sometimes she really wants to smack him. She would never actually do it, but the temptation occasionally arises.

“No, to the medbay.” Then, gentling her tone, “Let me take care of you.”

The defensiveness melts out of the Doctor's stance, his eyes going all soft and adoring in that slowly-becoming-familiar way Martha still isn't entirely sure she can take.

“I– Okay. Yes. I would like that.”

And Martha knows they are going to be okay.

DAY 24: BROKEN FINGERS

by TimeyWimeyStuff

"Urgh, how am I meant to do anything with this stupid splint on my finger!" exclaimed the Doctor, after trying and failing to connect up some wires to repair the TARDIS, for the third time.

"It would be far more unpleasant without the splint. Anyway, you're the one who forgot to get his finger out of the way when shutting the TARDIS door on a bunch of aliens that wanted to kill us," was the witty retort.

"I didn't mean to."

"Of course you didn't mean to, but it happened anyway, so now you have to accept the consequences."

The Doctor pouted miserably, but turned back to his attempts at TARDIS repairs.

DAY 25: COMPANION RESCUING THE DOCTOR

Old But Not Forgotten by Rowana Farrin

"At this point, I shouldn't even be surprised."

Peri Brown gazed around their cell with an unimpressed look. It was fairly nice, as prisons went, with sparse but comfortable furniture and pleasant lighting. The door was still locked however, with a guard outside, and a distinct lack of windows.

"I don't see how that's my fault," the Doctor huffed. He paced the room for a moment, before starting to pull out bits and pieces from his pockets. Probably he was going to work out some means of their escape.

Peri made herself comfortable on one of the chairs. "Not your fault?" She raised an eyebrow at him. "They specifically locked us up after you introduced yourself!"

"How was I supposed to know they'd find my name offensive? Really, I thought it was quite rude. I haven't even done anything yet!" He paused in his tinkering to frown in thought. "Then again…this place does seem awfully familiar. I'm almost sure I've been here before."

"Oh, that makes perfect sense then." Peri rolled her eyes.

The Doctor glared at her. "Why, pray tell, is that?"

"Only that I'm not surprised people who met you before would want to lock you up on sight," she answered, in a slightly smug tone.

The Doctor looked incensed at that. "I'll have you know that I'm an extremely charming person and that I have many friends throughout the universe who would be delighted to see me!"

"None of whom are apparently here, because they locked you up almost as soon as we landed," Peri pointed out meaningfully.

"Yes, well," the Doctor went back to his project, grumbling to himself. "I suppose something must have happened when I was last here. If only I could remember what it was."

Peri shrugged. "Whatever it was, you certainly made an impression."

“Maybe they just don't like 'doctors' have you thought of that,” the Doctor pointed out in a petty tone.

She had to concede that it was possible, but the city they had seen outside seemed too civilized for that. Then again, looks could very often be very deceiving as she had learned many times on their adventures. She hoped they hadn't landed themselves in another mess of political despots or police states or secret mad science. Would it hurt to have a relaxing adventure for a change?

The door suddenly opened and two guards entered. Behind them was another man, who was clearly someone important by the way they deferred to him. He was perhaps 50 or 60 years old with white grey hair and intense eyes. His was wearing a fairly simple suit in light grey, but it was very well made and of high quality fabric.

Peri's suspicions were confirmed when one of the guards snapped to attention. “These are them, sir!”

The Doctor was quick to take charge of the conversation before anyone else could utter a word. “Finally someone in authority! I'll have you know that my friend and I have been unfairly detained for no discernible reason! If this is how you treat visitors, I've half a mind to lodge a complaint with the Galactic Tourism Board!”

The other guard bristled at the confrontational tone. “You will show the proper respect to his majesty!”

The man in the suite, however, just raised his hand to stop the guards moving forward. He addressed the Doctor directly, seeming not at all bothered by the blustering. “Yes, sorry about that. It seems we have a case of mistaken identity.” He waved at them both and gave the guards a stern look. “This clearly isn't the Doctor.”

Oh, the Doctor would not let that slide. “Not the Doctor? I'll have you know that I AM the Doctor! The one and only! Anyone who claims otherwise is either ignorant or hiding something.” He narrowed his eyes at the strange man.

The man crossed his arms, frowning. “I think this has gone far enough. I may be getting old, but I think I can remember my own friend and he wouldn't be caught dead wearing a get up like that!”

“Get up?!” The Doctor was properly riled now. “This outfit is the height of sophistication!”

“Oh yeah? On what planet?”

Peri took that as her cue to step in, before the Doctor got them thrown into a real dungeon this time. “My apologies, your majesty,” she said, getting to her feet and offering a small bow. “There seems to be some mix up. This is the Doctor, even if he

isn't the one you were expecting. And I'm Peri. Perpugilliam Brown."

"Pleased to meet you both," the man gave Peri a warm smile, though he was still eying the Doctor with suspicious confusion. "Listen, I am sorry about all this. I asked the city watch to keep an eye out for the Doctor and I think they may have taken the request a bit too literally." He raised an eyebrow at the two guards who looked sheepishly at each other. "I can offer you a tour of the city to make up for it?"

"That would be lovely, wouldn't it, Doctor?"

The Doctor had gone oddly quiet and was staring at their host with dawning realization. "Steven?" he asked suddenly, much to Peri's confusion. The Doctor's eyes lit up with delight. "It is! Steven Taylor!" He jumped forward to shake the man's hand enthusiastically.

If anything, this only seemed to confuse the man, Steven, even more. "I'm sorry, do I know you?"

"Of course! I told you, I'm the Doctor!" the Doctor insisted, beaming. "We used to travel together, oh, a long time ago now. How else would I have recognized you?"

Steven crossed his arms, looking dubious. "That doesn't mean anything. I'm a public figure. Most people here know me whether I like it or not. And everyone knows I traveled with the Doctor. You could be making it up."

"Well, I bet most people won't know that I met you on Mechanus where you'd been stranded when your ship crashed. You were lucky to survive when the Daleks attacked, as I recall. Vicki and I very nearly left without you."

"Vicki…" Steven looked fond at some long distant memory. Then he shook his head stubbornly. "But this doesn't make sense. You can't be the Doctor. You look nothing like him for a start!"

Peri was starting to understand what was happening. This had to be an old friend of the Doctor's. It would actually explain a lot. Much as she was happy for the Doctor, she thought she had better step in before his usual tact started another argument. "Oh, I can explain that," she offered. "You see the Doctor does this thing where he changes his whole face and personality."

"It's called regeneration," the Doctor put in helpfully.

"Right," Peri conceded before pushing on. Steven was already looking more confused then ever. "I don't really understand it myself, but I saw it happen. One minute he was this nice English gentlemen and then next, well…" She waved at the Doctor with his puffed out chest and multicolored outfit as if that explained everything. Which honestly, it pretty much did.

“Personally, I think this is a vast improvement,” the Doctor added, looking immensely pleased. “That cricket outfit was just ridiculous.”

“That's a matter of opinion,” Peri giggled.

Steven was looking between them with narrowed eyes and seemed to be starting to understand. “So you really are the Doctor?” he ventured cautiously. “Tell me then, what was the name of the girl we met in Troy?”

The Doctor's face fell and he looked truly sad. “Katarina,” he answered softly. “She…I'm so sorry, Steven. I never should have taken her with us.”

“It wasn't your fault. It wasn't exactly safe in Troy either.” Steven sighed sadly and nodded. He offered the Doctor a knowing smile. “It is you then, Doctor. I never told anyone about her, not even Dodo.”

Peri almost wanted to ask who Katarina was and what happened to her, but decided against it. Whatever it was, it had obviously affected them both deeply and she thought it better not to pry.

The Doctor brightened considerably at Steven's admission. “It's so good to see you again, Steven!” He surged forward, this time enveloping Steven in a tight hug. Peri couldn't help grinning at the pair of them.

The old man laughed and hugged back. “It's good see you too, Doctor! I always wondered if you'd stop by again.”

“And the city looks marvelous! You've done a great job with the place.” The Doctor regarded his old friend proudly.

“Oh, I'm not in charge, not anymore. The elected Council and First Minister run things these days. Officially I'm retired, but I can't seem to convince them to drop the title.” Steven shrugged looking a little self conscious.

The Doctor clapped him on the shoulder, smiling warmly. “Don't sell yourself short. You've done very well, Steven. I always knew you had it in you.”

“Politics was never really my thing,” Steven admitted, though he looked quite pleased and even relieved by the Doctor's approval. “But I did my best. We have peace for the most part, and everyone gets fair representation and opportunity. It's not perfect. There's still crime and conflicts and the economy took a hit last year. But no one has their life-force sucked from them anymore, so I think it still counts as an improvement.”

Peri definitely wanted to hear the story behind that. It sounded horrifying.

“I think you've done a marvelous job, right Doctor?” Peri smiled brightly. “But maybe

we could continue this somewhere less claustrophobic?" She was only too happy to let the two old friends reminisce, but it wouldn't hurt to do it somewhere a bit more comfortable. Maybe without the lingering guards who looked completely baffled and unsure what to do with themselves.

"Oh yes, of course!" Steven held out his arm to Peri. "Perhaps you would do me the honour of joining me for lunch, Miss Peri." He leaned closer. "And maybe you can explain the deal with the coat."

Peri laughed. Oh it was going to be fun to swap stories with someone else who understood her crazy life and even crazier travelling companion. "After you, your majesty."

"Now don't you start. It's just Steven."

The Doctor trailed after them, huffing and shoving his hands into his pockets. "What is it with humans and my coat? Really, no sense of fashion at all." He was smiling as he said though. Because for once there was no great conspiracy or war to be halted. For once he could just relax and enjoy a visit with an old, dear friend.

DAY 26: WAR TORN

A Little Night Music by Vee

The TARDIS is as pristine as ever, a faint white glow emanating from the roundels on the walls the only light in the console room. Standing over the console, seemingly in deep contemplation is a white-haired old man. He mutters to himself, when suddenly the console sparks and he is thrown to floor. Picking himself up, he flicks a few switches and tries to readjust as the TARDIS is lurching from side to side in the Vortex. Frantically, he is now pacing around the console trying to solve this issue. As if by itself, the scanner screen flicks on to show that the TARDIS has seemingly landed in a featureless white void.

Emboldened by the images shown on the scanner as meaning he must have solved whatever issue was plaguing his TARDIS he presses the control and steps out to face whatever might be out there. Instead of the white void shown on the scanner, he is met by a battlefield and a bank of what seems to be fog rolling towards him. The fog hits and suddenly his body is on fire. Thick cloying fog penetrates every orifice, choking and suffocating him. He tries to call out but cannot, the fog is scratching and clawing at his throat making speech impossible. His body has finally given up; this is a fight it cannot win and he knows it. His vision darkens, and he slips into unconsciousness.

When he reawakens, he is in unfamiliar surroundings. Full of unrecognisable faces and indistinct people. Looking around, he sees that he is in a bed which would not look out of place in a hospital surrounded by heavily bandaged soldiers in torn combat fatigues. He reasons that he must be in some sort of war hospital far away from where he materialised. One of the nurses on patrol notices he is awake and starts to fuss over him, insisting that he rests up before he does himself any more damage. He is presented with a mirror and sees not the face he recognises, but one that is swathed in bandages with two hollow eyes the only thing that can be seen.

Days pass and he remains steadfastly bed-ridden at the behest of the various nurses tend to him. He is biding his time, regaining just enough strength to make his bid for freedom. Finally, his bandages are removed and the face he remembered is once again in front of him. Now, he thinks, is the time to make his play. Surreptitiously he creeps out of his bed and down the ward. He knows where he must get to make all this waiting worthwhile. Unbeknownst to him, his every move is being quietly observed by the legions of nurses tending to the other patients. Beneath his feet, a floorboard complains loudly, and as if in one succinct motion all the nurses turn to look at him. *Excellent*, he thinks, everything is going according to his meticulous plan.

As he carefully manoeuvres his way across the rest of the ward, a single nurse is shadowing him. Sticking close enough that he is aware of her presence but just far enough away that he cannot do anything about it. Then he stops, and she careens into

the back of him. This elicits a small chuckle from the man who is now looming over her. “Who are you?” she asks. “I am the Master, and you will obey me.”

DAY 27: SEEING STARS

by DoctorStory

Once upon a time, next to a single barn on the sand dunes of Gallifrey, there was a lone child lying in the sand looking up at the stars. This child often came to this barn at night, sometimes to cry, sometimes to scream and kick the hay bales when he was angry at Borusa, and sometimes, like now, he came to this barn to look up at the stars, hoping that someday he could get away from Borusa and the Academy and his schoolmates who teased and bullied him so and escape into the stars! He was deep in thought when a voice called out his name from the darkness of the night. He turned his head to see who it was, and saw his best friend, one of the only rays of light in the darkness that is the Academy, emerging from the darkness. The friend's eyes lit up as he spotted the child. "There you are, Thete, I've been looking everywhere for you!" said the friend with a relief.

"Hey, buddy!" the child said.

"What are you doing all the way out here? You know that we're not allowed this far out from the Academy," said the friend.

"Just... wishing," said the child.

"For what?" asked the friend, as he lay down next to him.

"Wishing to just... get out there. And away from... all this," said the child.

"Can I come with you?" asked the friend.

"You're my best friend in all of Gallifrey. Of course you can come with me! And we'll visit every single star in the sky. I promise you," said the child, and the friend smiled.

Suddenly, they heard the wheezing groaning of a TARDIS inside the barn and the friend sat up in alarm. "It's Borusa! He's found us!" said the friend, but the child took the friend's arm to stop him from running away.

"No. No, I don't think so..." he said.

"Why do you say that?" asked the friend.

"Just a feeling" said the child. "Come on. Let's investigate!" he continued, and they headed for the barn.

Slowly the barn door opens and the child and the friend walked through, trying their best to see anything in the darkness of the barn. Suddenly, the doors of a TARDIS that's in the corner opens up with bright light shining from the other side and the two friends slowly walked through them, into a white console room (like the one the first Doctor had). "It's a TARDIS! Never seen them up close before!" said the friend.

"I have. Once," said the child.

"What? When?" asked the friend.

"Last year. Long story." said the child. "But why is this one here? Did someone send it to us?" the child continued. As if to answer him, the TARDIS wheezed and groaned into life, with the time rotor moving and the child and the friend had to cling on to the console.

"What's happening?" said the friend.

"I think it's taking off!" answered the child.

"Where?" asked the friend.

"I don't know!" answered the child and after a few seconds the TARDIS stops and the doors opened, revealing the Medusa Cascade on the other side, surrounded by stars. The child and the friend are in awe as they make their way to the doors.

"Woah... we're in space!" said the friend. "More than that, look!" He pointed to the Medusa Cascade. "The Medusa Cascade!" he continued.

"Yeah, you're right!" said the child, and they both stared at it for a while, taking it all in. "Just... just promise me, okay? Promise me you'll come with me if I ever decide to fly off into the stars. And promise me that we'll see every single one, okay?" said the child seriously.

"I promise!" said the friend.

"No. No, I want you to really mean it. Let's make a pact! from this moment on, if I ever fly away into the stars, you will always and forever promise to come with me," said the child and reached out a hand for the friend to shake it.

"I promise. Always and forever." The friend said and shook it, and suddenly a thud is heard from the TARDIS, as if it has taken off and landed without them noticing, and the doors opened and a man storms inside.

"What did I tell you? No sneaking off at night!" The man said and dragged them both out.

Many, many centuries later, the Fifteenth Doctor is sitting by the TARDIS doors, looking over the Medusa Cascade, deep in thought. A couple of seconds later, he smiled a sad smile. "Always and forever" he said, and he stood up and closed the doors and all that's left is a blue box flying off into the stars to visit them all.

DAY 28: TARDIS CAT

Something in the TARDIS by The1_Foxy

C'rizz's chitin feet clanked on the hard TARDIS floor. He thought he heard another, softer sound pattering, but hearing a weird noise in the TARDIS, especially this far in the corridors wasn't anything special. He only paid attention out of curiosity that it might reveal what was in some of these rooms he hadn't been shown yet, as he wouldn't just barge in uninvited.

He was looking at a distant door, wondering if he'd eventually know what was behind them all, when in his periphery a shape shot across the intersection at the end of the hallway. He moved his attention to it just quickly enough to see a worm-like black shape go behind the bend in the wall. His gait became more cautious as he went after it. If there was someone else around he may have tried not to change colour a little in trepidation. He could hear and feel the vibrations of it moving in erratic ways, thumping and sliding on the ground.

For a few seconds after he turned the corner he was able to watch the small, mostly black, fuzzy creature roll over the floor. Then its eyes met his and it suddenly flipped round and stood tall on its four legs. C'rizz jumped and half covered himself behind the wall, but kept his eyes keenly on the creature. The scrunched up face, show of teeth, and unpleasant hissing noise was an almost certain indication that it wasn't friendly. As he continued to stare, the thing backed away, getting lower and lower to the ground until it was flat against it in a corner, rumbling at him.

That seemed like a sign it wasn't going to attack, so he backed away himself till he was some ways down the other end of that section of hallway. Then he turned and ran to try and find someone.

"Charlotte– uh Charley!" he yelled, without any sense she'd be nearby but yelling peoples names in the TARDIS seemed to just work either way. He got a few twists and turns closer to the console before Charley's voice returned. "C'rizz? What's wrong?"

He slowed his pace as he heard Charley walk down to meet him.

When he saw her he responded with a serious expression. "There's an animal in the TARDIS."

Charley looked far less alarmed at this revelation. "Is there a bug in your room again?"

"No, no it was this big," he gestured with his hands, "and it was fuzzy, or spiky, with massive eyes."

“Well I certainly hope that isn’t a bug. Where did you see it?” Rather than scared, Charley looked ready to walk off and find it already.

“Further down the corridors, near the kitchens almost- Wait, shouldn’t we tell The Doctor about this before we go after it?” Charley had started to walk past him.

“And do you know where The Doctor is?” she said as she heard C’rizz lagging behind her.

“He went outside”

“Outside where exactly?”

“…” They both knew that the Doctor hadn’t explained where he was going or why. He had tried to in a way but they both hadn't really understood it. “If I get devoured by a small but deadly beast because of you I’ll be very upset, I won’t leave you any of my stuff.” He quickly caught up with her.

“What belongings of yours could I possibly want?”

“I don’t know, maybe you want to upgrade your wardrobe.”

“You’re wearing a hooded jumper with a stain on it.”

C’rizz looked down at the not quite faded stain. “Obviously I don’t mean this! If I got devoured right now this jumper would be completely ruined, that’s just ridiculous” He played it up by shaking his head at her, but before she could fire back C’rizz suddenly stopped.

His antenna twitched, sending vibrations of sound Charley couldn’t even hear yet. “It’s nearby, moving. I think… It’s getting closer.”

They both waited in anticipation. Soon Charley could hear it as well, a small pitter patter, which wasn’t very scary but couldn’t be too sure. Before it made its way into view it made a new sound.

“Merow!”

“What…?” said Charley, sounding as if she might laugh.

“It didn’t make that noise before– there it is!” C’rizz pointed as a fluffy black cat turned the corner. Charley couldn’t help herself but to laugh, even as she felt bad for the creature that had seemed to stop and stare at C’rizz in fear.

“C’rizz, that’s just a cat! They’re quite safe.”

C'rizz went a shade paler with embarrassment. "Well, I can't be expected to know that..."

Charley put her hand over her mouth to stifle her laughter and cleared her throat. "It's okay, puss puss, come here." She had crouched down on the floor trying to coax the cat over, but it only glanced at her briefly before looking back at C'rizz. "You're scaring it. I think it's your eyes. Don't stare at the cat so much."

C'rizz looked at Charley instead and got a bit lower to the ground himself. "What should we do with it?"

"It looks like it has a collar so we must find out who owns it and take it back before the TARDIS takes off again."

"Oh, it's a domesticated animal?" He glanced at it again, curious about its purpose but remembered not to look at it for too long.

"Yes, people keep them for mousing, and as pets." The cat didn't move any closer despite Charley's efforts. "How about you go to the kitchen and find some meat to lure it with, and maybe while you're gone I can earn its trust a little better."

"Oh, I can see that I'm not wanted," C'rizz said sarcastically before getting up carefully and making his way to the kitchen.

He returned with something called ham, which from what he could tell was probably made from an animal. Charley had managed to get closer to the car without it running away and it looked a fair bit less frightened. Unfortunately it hissed as soon as C'rizz got too close, even though he'd tried to barely look at the thing.

"I think it's scared because of your face," Charley said, taking the packet of ham from him.

"Thanks." C'rizz sat behind Charley, facing the wall so him and the cat could not make eye contact.

"What I mean is, you're very unfamiliar looking, you look like, well, another animal, not a human like the cat is used to. It's just like how you were scared of it before you knew what it was." She threw the ham out for the cat which it was very receptive to. "You could potentially let it know that you're safe as well. Here," she handed C'rizz the packet of ham.

He got up into a crouch position no longer hiding and threw a small piece of ham at the cat. Amazingly it was greedy enough to ignore C'rizz now and just eat. He threw the next piece closer to Charley and the cat moved closer. He continued this until Charley was able to comfortably stroke the cat from its head to its tail, and when it wasn't eating, it pushed its head into Charley's legs and almost looked like it was smiling.

Charley picked the animal up which it accepted surprisingly well. “Alright, now we should head out of here right away so the poor thing doesn’t get lost in the TARDIS again”

“Maybe it wasn’t lost, maybe it was just curious?” They began walking briskly to the console room.

“You wouldn’t know this, C’rizz, but there’s a saying we have, on earth, that curiosity killed the cat.”

“That’s bleak. This one seems fine though.”

“We got there just in time.” The cat was getting restless so she repositioned it in her arms and started to walk faster again.

Soon they were in the console room and Charley tasked C’rizz with finding a box to put the cat in because it was getting restless. Before he could find anything suitable however, the TARDIS door opened and the cat made a sudden dash out of Charley's arms.

“No!” she yelled and started to run after it, before she saw the Doctor appear in the doorway and scoop the cat up.

“Ah, you found it! Good work you two.” He said, not even looking at his dumbfounded friends staring at him from the console. “I’ll be right back,” he announced, then swung out the door again taking the cat with him.

Once the door closed the two left behind companions turned to each other to confirm their mutual confusion. You couldn’t even be surprised with that man anymore.

DAY 29: TIMELINE ERROR / ABORTED TIMELINE

things are better if I stay by freckles_a_constellation

The Doctor jerks awake to a warm hand on his shoulder, a pounding pain in his head and afterimages of things that don't bear thinking about still swirling in the corners of his vision. Time feels wrong, out of sync, making it harder for him to reorient himself. The hand slides down his arm, steady grip turning into a reassuring stroke.

The Doctor should be alone. Or well, he shouldn't, it never goes well for him, being alone, but he is. Well, at least he was, when he unwillingly fell asleep while trying to fix the damage inflicted on his TARDIS from the temporal collision with his past self's one, his own actions taken to prevent that same collision from blowing up the universe, having the Titanic crash (more like bump, in the grand scheme of things) into it, and free falling to Earth.

Either way, the Doctor expected to be alone. Before he can make any progress figuring out who could have possibly intruded on his impromptu nap in his empty, floating through the vortex time ship, his vision clears enough for the mystery to be solved through sensory input instead of speculation.

“Martha? What are you doing here?”

Martha's eyebrows briefly draw together in puzzlement, but then her face settles into a look of exasperation.

“I came here to check on you and clearly I was right to do so, if you managed to fall asleep under the console,” she says, like it's obvious and he's being difficult on purpose.

This doesn't answer the Doctor's question at all. Time continues feeling wrong and that could probably answer the Doctor's question, if he cared to examine it. He doesn't, not yet.

“What's the last thing you remember?” he asks instead, desperately hoping to be proven wrong.

“Shouldn't I be the one asking you that?” Martha asks right back, raising an eyebrow sardonically.

The Doctor is aware he sounds ridiculous, that from her perspective he isn't making any sense, but he needs to know and he can't look at her timelines, he just can't.

“Please just answer the question.” Some of his feelings must have bled into his voice because Martha's face softens into a look of compassion all the more devastating for not being tinged with pity.

“The actual last thing I remember is being worried you didn't join me in the library and going to search for you, but I suppose you must be asking about the last adventure we had together, and that was space Titanic crashing, during Christmas of all times.”

The Doctor gapes.

“But, but that is impossible!”

Martha looks properly worried now. She steps closer to him and he automatically stumbles back. For a split second, that makes her look even more worried, but then she steels herself, mouth pursing with determination.

“What about it seems impossible to you?” she asks, calm, reasonable, willing and ready to get to the bottom of what to her must without a doubt look like utter insanity on his part. The Doctor misses her so much it hurts.

“It's also the last adventure I remember. And you weren't there.”

Now Martha just looks confused.

“Why wouldn't I be there?”

This is so, so much worse than if this was simply a past, not future, version of her. The Doctor laughs, brief, mirthless, a sound startled out of him more than anything else.

“Because you left me,” he admits, beyond caring that he's breaking all the promises he's ever made himself to never let her see what it did to him. Because she made the right choice, and the last thing he'd ever want is for her to feel guilty or pity him, and he knows she would, or at least feel bad for him, wonderful, big hearted Martha who loved him when all he deserved was scorn.

“Oh, Doctor,” and he can see it now, the painful sympathy in her eyes, “that was just a dream.”

Of course she would come to entirely the wrong conclusion. Of course. It is only natural, for a human, to assume that someone confused nightmare for reality rather than consider the possibility of two conflicting timelines colliding. The Doctor doesn't know whether to laugh some more or cry.

Stuck in his head, he didn't even notice Martha getting closer to him again until she was right there, a breath away and reaching out. And the Doctor knows he shouldn't, knows

that this will only make everything hurt worse. But he practically collapses into her arms, made helpless by the force of his pathetic need.

“I wouldn't leave you if I could help it. I told you, as long as you want me here, I'll keep choosing to stay. I can't promise the world, but I can promise you this. Trust me.”

And Rassilon, the Doctor wants to. She probably even means it. But it's a promise made from another Martha to another him. He would never be allowed to keep it, to keep her, even if he were selfish enough to try. Sooner or later, her version of the Doctor will fix the broken time differential, re-establish the temporal shields, replace the Ziton crystals and oh, probably also tune the chronostabiliser, on his side, and she will be back to him, time reasserting itself more surely than homing electricity.

It'd be so much better to let go now, to get back under the console, work in tandem with his other self to send this Martha back to her proper place and preserve the continuity of time. But this is the last time he'll ever hold her and it's been so long, since anyone touched him with gentle affection.

Soon enough, the Doctor will be alone, with only one more memory of Martha's kindness and the knowledge that losing her wasn't inevitable to serve as salt in a wound that hasn't even begun to scab over before it got torn through again. For now, Martha's arms are around him one last time, the human warmth of her body easing the ache of his.

“Tell me again,” the Doctor begs, choked up worse than having his face buried in Martha's hair could mask or justify.

“I'm not leaving. I love you.”

And it's not like he didn't know. But it's the first time he's heard it from her, as himself, and it isn't for him. Even as his hearts shatter in his chest, the Doctor knows he should say it back. She deserves at least that much from him, this critical piece of honesty. No sound will come out of his mouth. Another goodbye passed by with a missed chance.

“Shhh, Doctor, don't. It's alright,” she whispers, and it's unfair that a single person can be so understanding, even less fair that a single person should have so much cause for it. None of this is fair and it's all always, always his fault.

One of Martha's hands sneaks into his hair and he can tell she means it, calm and reassurance flowing into him powerful enough to bring his hyperventilating to a halt before he's properly realised it started. A balm to the scars he keeps scratching open. Clemency.

That other Doctor, whatever it was he did differently, best be worthy of this.

DAY 30: EXPERIMENT

by DoctorStory

Dark. Why is everything dark? Did someone turn off the lights? The last thing I remember was that…I was in the hospital for my surgery. Did it not work? Am I… dead? Oh, god! Mum! Dad! My friends…I didn't even say goodbye… AAH! What was that? Was that me? Couldn't be, sounded more like… metal scraping against each other. But there isn't anyone else here in this dark, empty void… but I'll try calling out, just in case!

"Hello?"

Was… was that me again? Felt like it, but it couldn't be, that sounded more like a computer trying to sing than an actual person… but I can't see anyone else, so it has to be me! Maybe… maybe I just lost my voice and they had to replace it? Yeah! Yeah, that has to be it!

Wait… light! I can see light! And it's getting brighter, like some kind of door… where am I? Some kind of lab, and– oh, hello! A person, at last! And he looks like a doctor, so maybe he can explain what happened to my voice!

"Ah, you're waking up, good! Oh, well, not waking up, technically, because of the whole…"

What's he taking about? Why can't I wake up? What's going on?

Okay, first things first: what happened to my voice?

"What happened to my voice?"

God, there it is again. That horrible voice. Doesn't sound human at all, but at the same time, it does…

"Oh, that's… a bit hard to explain. Let's just say that I had to replace it."

Oh, good! Just what I hoped! He just had to replace my voice, nothing else! Maybe I can go home now and see mum and dad? And my friends?

"Friends…"

Oh, Did I say that out loud?

“Friends? You want some friends? Don’t worry, you’ll be meeting them soon!”

That’s a relief! He probably needs to check up on me and then I can go meet my friends! Can’t wait to resume playing Cyborg Mayhem 3 with Adam!

“Adam…”

Did I say that too?

“No. Not with Adam. Or Edward, or Johanna, or any of your… other friends. Actually, I’m afraid that you can’t meet them or anyone you’ve previously known and loved again, for the rest of your, erm, life.”

What? What’s he saying? I want to meet them! I want to meet them now! What’s the problem?

“I want to meet them!”

“That’s not possible. Policy, you see. It’s for safety.”

Safety? What does he mean?

“Safety?”

“Yes, safety, because, how shall I put this? They won’t… agree with you anymore. Everyone won’t agree with you anymore. That’s why you need new friends!”

What’s he talking about? Of course they’ll agree with me! I’m me! I just have a new voice, that’s all! I don’t need new friends!

“New friends?”

Oops. didn’t mean to say that out loud.

“Yes. Yes, new friends! Stronger, better friends!”

No. NO! No new friends! Oh, why can’t I speak? Maybe I can reach out with my hand and then he’ll– what? What happened to my arm? It has some sort of… cloth around it. And my hand looks all… rotten!

“See? You see? Your friends and family can’t possibly see you like this. Not ever! THAT’S why you need new ones.”

Oh, god. he’s right! They’ll just be afraid of me! But what new friends? I can’t see anyone else in this room, except… yes! The doctor! He can be my new friend! Let me just reach out and hug him…

“Will you be my friend?”

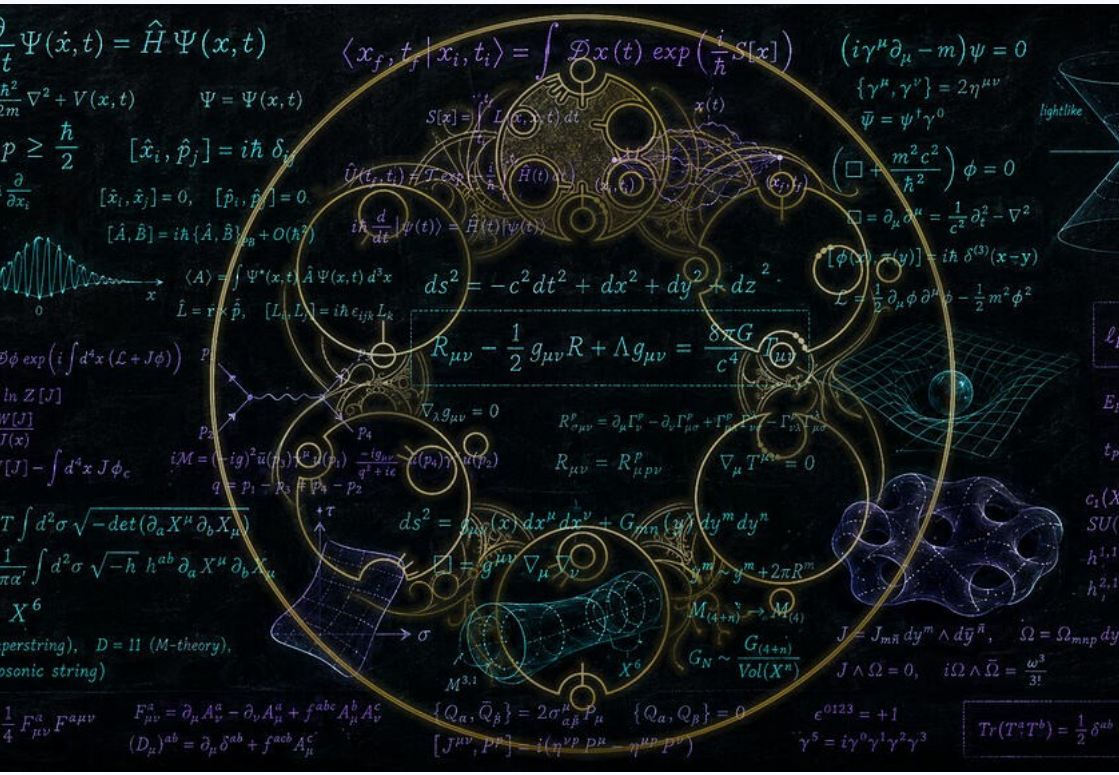
Oh, why am I so slow? I just want a hug and then– no. NO! Where does that electricity come from? Me? NO! Get up! Oh, god, did I kill him? Didn’t mean to. Maybe if I try again with someone else. But where is everyone? Maybe if I try that door, I’ll– yes! Hello! Will you be my friend?

NOOO! NOT AGAIN! Not... why are all of you running away?

I just wanted a friend...

DAY 30: EXPERIMENT

by paradoxchild



ALT 1: THE DOCTOR'S ODDS AND ENDS DRAWER

An Old Mascot by Rowana Farrin

The TARDIS console hummed pleasantly, oblivious to the bangs and hisses going on underneath. Wires and electronic parts and other unidentifiable bits were scattered across the floor next to a pair of legs in checked trousers. The Doctor muttered to himself as he tinkered away at something under the console. Ace leaned against it, looking bored. She had no idea what the Professor was trying to fix this time and experience had taught her it would probably just lead to more trouble anyway.

"Ace? Could you get me the electro-magnetic polariser?" came the Professor's muffled voice.

Ace frowned in confusion. "The what?"

"The polariser" He waved his hand unhelpfully towards the door to the inner parts of the TARDIS. "Down the hall, second door on the left, third drawer down."

Ace rolled her eyes, stuck her hands in her jacket pocket, and made her way down the corridor. Honestly, how was she supposed to know what an electro-whatsit looked like? The directions led her to some kind of workroom or maybe storeroom. It was full of odds and ends and half finished projects. It was a wonder the Professor could find anything in this mess. Not that she was volunteering to tidy up.

She stepped around a precarious pile of circuits to a large storage cabinet and pulled open the third drawer down. It looked just as cluttered as the room around it and nothing looked like a magnetic thingie. Frowning, she started rummaging around for anything that looked like a tool. Her hand brushed something soft and she pulled it out in surprise. It was a rather rumpled and dusty teddy bear. No wait, a panda bear. Well that was odd.

"Now how'd you get in there," she wondered. Giving up her search as a lost cause, she went back to the console room, panda in hand.

"Professor?" she called as she returned.

"Hmm?" The Professor was still half hidden underneath the console and didn't seem to be paying much attention.

"Why have you got a bear in the TARDIS?"

“A what?” The Doctor sounded mildly alarmed and slide out to have a better look. His eyes lit up when he saw the panda. “Oh! HiFi! I wondered where you'd got to!”

Ace raised an eyebrow. So the panda had a name. That just raised further questions. “So it's yours then?” she guessed. She was suddenly struck by the thought that this was some kind of childhood keepsake. She honestly couldn't imagine the Professor ever being that young. It was weird to think about, but she supposed he must have been once.

But the Professor shook his head. “Oh no, not mine.” He stood up and took the panda, regarding it with a fond if sad smile. “He belonged to a friend of mine. Steven Taylor.”

Ah, that made sense. Ace knew the Professor had travelled with other people before her. She had even met Mel on Ice World before the other girl had decided to travel a different way. “Was Steven a kid then?” she found herself asking. She couldn't help but think that life on the TARDIS was pretty dangerous for a kid.

“Heaven's no!” The Doctor laughed. “No, Steven was a space pilot. HiFi was his mascot, as I understood it. A good luck charm of sorts.”

“A space pilot?” Ace's eyes lit up. “Wicked!” Then she remembered the sad look on the Professor's face. “Did something happen to him?”

“What?” The Doctor had been staring at the panda, lost in his thoughts and memories. “No, no. He just left. Like Mel. They all do eventually.” He sounded lonely and seemed to be talking more to himself than her. “I do wonder if maybe I pushed him too much. Mind you, he could be dreadfully stubborn. I really aught to check up on him one of these days.”

He handed the panda back to Ace and returned to tinkering with the TARDIS console. Ace shrugged, knowing the Professor probably wouldn't get around to checking on his friend. It sounded lonely, always leaving people behind. Maybe that was why he didn't go back. Hard enough to say goodbye the first time. She supposed she would leave too one day. But not today or any time soon if she could help it. He couldn't get rid of her that easily.

Leaving the Professor to his project, she turned back to the interior of the TARDIS. “Well, HiFi. It's you and me now!”

She found her way to the wardrobe room. She didn't use the room often, preferring to stick to her own clothes. Still, it did have the uncanny ability to contain exactly what she was looking for whenever she came. Sure enough, in a small dresser drawer, she found just the thing. Dusting off the panda, she fitted Hifi with a little black jacket, complete with the Royal Air Force insignia on the back. A miniature pair of goggles on top of his head completed the look and Ace grinned.

“Now you look a proper pilot! Come on, HiFi! You can be my mascot now!” She tucked the panda into the big pocket of her jacket and ventured back to see what trouble the Professor would find this time.

ALT 2: ELECTRIC SHOCK

To Wirrn or Not To Wirrn by Rowana Farrin

It happened in the blink of an eye. One moment Harry was rushing into the cryogenic chamber in answer to Rogin's shouts. The next he felt something slimy brush his hand. He didn't really think about it as they both darted back through the door and closed it. Another man was dead, the larval Wirrn were trying to break in, and the Doctor was still out of action. He didn't have time to worry about the odd tingling feeling on his hand. He wiped it off quickly and ran after Rogin to fetch the weapons.

By the time they got back and had managed to drive the giant, green worm off, Harry was feeling decidedly odd. The tingling in his hand had progressed up his arm. It was like his flesh was crawling, coming alive all on its own. He started to say something, but his tongue wouldn't listened. His head was full of fluff and whispers and he couldn't seem to focus. The Doctor was saying something about electricity and the Wirrn Queen and… That's right. The queen. The swarm. He had to… had to…

"Harry?"

He blinked. Sarah was looking at him with concern. "Harry, what's wrong?"

"What?" he blurted, suddenly unsure of his own thoughts. "I don't… I can't think."

Everyone was looking at him now and he back up until his back hit the wall. No, this was wrong. He couldn't think. The whispers were growing more insistent. He should fight. He was surrounded by enemies. The survival of the swarm was paramount. The humans had to die. No. No! It was Sarah. Sarah and the Doctor and he couldn't…

"Harry, your hand!"

Sarah's alarmed voice made everyone look. Harry almost wished he hadn't. The skin on his hand had turned green and pebbly. Just like Noah's. "Oh crumbs," he mumbled, sliding to the floor.

Sarah reached for him, but the Doctor held her back. "Stay back," he warned. "Harry. Harry, can you hear me?"

"Yes, Doctor," he mumbled automatically, still staring at his arm. The whispers were growing steadily more insistent. Well, that rather cinched it. How was he going to explain to the Brigadier he got himself turned into a bloody insect? "I think… I've really gone and done it, haven't I?"

Sarah looked like she was holding back tears. “Don't be silly, you're going to be fine!” She pulled on the Doctor's arm. “You can help him, can't you?”

“I can't say,” the Doctor admitted, much to Harry and Sarah's dismay. “We don't have much time. It didn't take Noah long.” At least the Doctor did sound fairly sorry about that. Harry supposed that was something.

“Maybe we should kill him now,” Rogin said grimly. He and Vira had guns trained on Harry. “Before he's a danger to the rest of us.”

“No!” Sarah shouted, pushing Rogin's gun down. She glared at all of them, before setting her gaze on the Doctor. “Doctor, please! You have to do something!”

The Doctor was frowned, lost in his own desperate thoughts. “It may already be too late. Once the transformation reaches the brain…”

Harry was only half listening. It was taking all of his concentration to hold back the urge to attack his friends. The whispers were growing more and more demanding. He had to protect the swarm. Had to ensure the new generation. Had to follow the Queen… The Queen. That was it. The Doctor had said something about the AutoGuard killing the Queen. He could almost feel the memory in his head. The pain and shock of the electricity. The determination to keep going until the next generation was assured.

“Electricity,” he managed to get out. The conversation in the room died and everyone looked at him. “You said…killed the Queen. So if…”

Sarah blanched, but the Doctor was grinning. “Yes! An electric shock! That just might work!” he declared. He immediately rushed to the computer console and started gathering electrical leads.

Sarah looked between Harry and the Doctor, worrying her lip. “But Doctor, won't that..” she didn't finish.

“That much voltage will kill him, Doctor,” Vira pointed out. Her tone was matter of fact, but there was a touch of sympathy.

“I know,” the Doctor replied, voice grim but determined. He started attaching leads to Harry, careful not to touch the infected skin. “You have the medical technology to revive him here, don't you?”

“Well, yes,” Vira admitted, sounding unsure. “But there's no guarantee.”

“Do it,” Harry insisted. He gritted his teeth and closed his eyes.

“Harry, are you sure?” Sarah asked. She sounded terribly worried and Harry wished he could say something reassuring. Unfortunately it was taking all his concentration to

keep his wits his own.

“Better dead then some great bally space caterpillar,” he bit out. He really didn't want to die. But he wanted to kill his friends even less, no matter what the whispers said. Better if it was just him if it came to it.

“Good man,” the Doctor said, giving his arm a reassuring squeeze. “Hold tight, Harry.”

Before Harry could ask what he was supposed to hold tight too, there was a blinding, white pain throughout his whole body. Then nothing.

“...hold on, I think it's working! Harry? Harry, can you hear me?”

Harry felt like his body was on fire and numb all at the same time. His head was foggy, but somehow, blessedly, it was his own. No more whispers. He wasn't sure if he was really alive or dead, but at least he was himself again. The blackness was a welcome relief and he felt he would rather like to stay there a while longer. The familiar voice was insistent and urgent, though. He didn't really want to let them down. Slowly, he blinked open his eyes to see the now familiar bight lights and white walls of the Nerva Station.

“There you are, Harry!” the Doctor declared, beaming down at him. “How are you feeling?”

Harry tried to take stock. His whole body felt like pins and needles. He could probably do with a long rest and a check up in the sick bay, but he doubted he would get either anytime soon. “I...” His tongue felt thick and it took a moment to get the words out. “I'll be right as rain in a tick,” he managed to mumble. He rolled onto his side, trying to get some feeling back into his legs and arms.

Sarah caught his arm and helped him sit up. “You gave us a scare, Harry,” she admitted in a hushed voice. “For a moment I thought...” She bit her lip and shook her head. “Just be more careful next time!”

Harry managed a weak smile and let Sarah pull him shakily to his feet. “Will do, old girl,” he returned. He was just grateful he was around for there to be a next time. He rubbed his arms, trying to get more feeling back into them. He was delighted to see that his hand was free of green skin.

Sarah made a face at him, but was apparently too glad to have him back too himself to chastise him about the nickname. “You better. Come on, the Doctor's got a plan.”

Of course he did, Harry thought wryly. Hopefully a plan to keep them all alive and not turned into giant space wasps. Then he would have to ask if that TARDIS of the

Doctor's had a proper sick bay. He needed a stiff brandy and a long nap after that experience.

ALT 3: HIDING AN INJURY

Running by fumbling_for_fics

The journey back to the TARDIS had been more comforting than usual; Ace McShane walked close to the Doctor as he mused about where they could venture next in his machine, smiling to herself that, for once, he seemed to be speaking with sincerity. The sun shone bright in the clear sky above Perivale, and the quiet suburban streets helped calm her mind. The banality of ordinary life was a welcome reprieve from the primality the pair had been subjected to mere moments ago.

It was only when Ace crossed the threshold and entered the TARDIS that the true extent of what had occurred began to register in her mind. The Doctor, however, was typically unfazed, moving to the central console to examine its instruments, sparing no thought for anything else. Ace sighed to herself, but, as she moved to the door leading deeper into the vessel she called home, she swore she could feel her companion's gaze cut through her back.

The uniformly white corridors had once disoriented her. Endless pathways nestled between identical walls with identical patterns – identical roundels interrupted at regular points by identical columns – made it difficult to find her bearings when she stepped aboard for the first time, and, even now, on the rare occasions she ventured further into the TARDIS, the ancient machine still made it impossible to move with complete confidence through its depths – Ace was thankful that her bedroom was closer to the control room than it was to the library.

As she rounded the corner and glimpsed her door, a dull ache twisted through her calves; with each step she took towards the bedroom, the pain swelled further until, just a few paces away from reaching out to turn the handle, a flaring agony tore through her legs. Ace's knees buckled. She steadied herself against the wall and resisted the urge to prod or rub the pained area, a gnawing instinct telling her it would only make matters worse. With a noise somewhere between a wince and a groan, Ace opened the door and nearly fell into her room, only remaining upright out of sheer force of will.

Her jacket felt heavier as she hobbled to the bed, but she sensed removing it would somehow make the pain spread to her shoulders. The badges caught against each other in the impact as her body met the mattress with a dull thud. Ace cursed under her breath. Despite being alone, she made sure that the string of expletives – growing longer and more visceral as the pain persisted – were spoken in a whisper; the Doctor had chastised her more than once for her language, yet, to Ace's confusion, he seldom took issue with her other rebellious qualities or her other more explosive proclivities.

The pain made it difficult for her mind to wander. It kept Ace confined to the present moment, to the bedroom and the fire in her legs. There was a small mirror she

remembered seeing in the bedside drawer when she first arrived and unpacked her belongings. She retrieved the item, paying no mind to floral design or the initials 'V.W.' on its back, and put it beside her. It took considerable effort, but she eventually rolled the legs of her trousers up past her knees and repositioned herself on the bed; holding the mirror in one hand and supporting her leg in the other, Ace examined the skin, only to find nothing amiss.

She began to wonder if it was a trick, if the pain she felt was instead her body adjusting to a lack of adrenaline after being hunted for hours. Her adventures in the TARDIS had led her to all manner of injuries; she had been knocked unconscious in a school in Shoreditch before jumping through a plate glass window; she had nearly drowned in a sealed chamber when she and the Doctor fought against knights and witches from another dimension; Ace was no stranger to peril, but there was something indescribable about this new pain.

Her head felt lighter, her vision blurrier. She held a palm to her forehead and tried to blink back into focus to no avail. Then, as soon as the disorientation came, it vanished and took the pain in her legs with it. Ace sat on the bed for a few minutes in cautious silence, worried that the reprieve was merely temporary, but, eventually, took a chance and rose to her feet.

She regretted standing up immediately.

"Got a knack for timing, haven't you?" Ace groaned, clutching her side. The area beneath her hand was tender – the garish image of a potential wound pressed itself into her imagination.

Summoning the strength she knew she had but which threatened to abandon her, Ace discarded her jacket and shirt, and raised her arm to get a better look at her side in the hand-mirror. As she feared, the reflection depicted a grizzly sight; a thick and swollen bruise splayed across her skin like mould on a neglected wall, its blurred outline interlacing its hues of deep black and vivid purple with the pastier complexion of her body. Ace squinted and looked closer. In the centre of the discoloured mass was the impression of a fist, an impact doubtless sustained on the planet whose name she never learned, but whose people she had fled from.

"Karra..." There was a unique twinge of angst to the memory, more acute than any physical injury Ace had sustained. In her rational mind, she knew that Karra was only in her life for less than a day, but something within her – a potent, primal part of her true self – felt as though they had known one another for lifetimes. That inscrutable instinct compelled Ace to believe that Karra was the one who injured her, that Karra had somehow marked her to ensure a piece of her remained even after she was gone; she ghosted her fingers over the broken skin – Karra was still with her.

Ace glanced back at the mirror and lingered on the bruise before checking elsewhere for other injuries. There were a few cuts on her back and shoulders, small disturbances to

the skin she felt compelled to gently rake her nails over without knowing why; Ace was estranged from herself as she studied her body closely, feeling a strange flicker of disappointment upon finding herself otherwise unharmed. She sighed and ran a hand through her hair.

No sooner did she look back at the mirror than Ace flinched at the sight held within it. Her face was intact, her nose and mouth were hers, and every detail was unharmed save for one: the eyes staring back at her were a golden yellow.

"The planet's gone," the Doctor had told her, his voice echoing in her head, "but it lives on inside you. It always will."

Ace shut her eyes and kept them firmly closed for several seconds. "I felt like I could run forever," she remembered admitting to him, "like I could smell the wind, and feel the grass under my feet, and just run forever." She could still feel that urge, a compulsion nestled firmly in the heart of who she was. Ace had spent most of her life running, but, with Karra, they had the advantage; she was no longer the victim of Chad Boyle or the outcast for befriending a Pakistani – she was no longer fleeing, she was running free.

When she finally opened her eyes, it was as though Ace had awoken from a dream, the memories of that other world – the other life she knew she could never live – blew away on her breath as she sighed. The face looking back at her in the mirror was her own, with two human eyes set in the human skull of a young woman who had never felt more inhuman.

Ace closed the mirror, tossed it onto the bed, and retrieved her clothes. She started towards the door, but stopped herself as she reached for the handle.

"No point," she mumbled.

In the time she had spent by his side, Ace learned that, although the Doctor had many qualms concerning violence, his clinical perspective hardened him to the more unpalatable occurrences across time and space. He had no reservations in condemning the horrors he encountered, but, having lived for several centuries, it was evident that he could weather the maelstroms of the universe with a seemingly effortless aptitude; Ace knew that an injured body was no less common to the Doctor's lifestyle than a star in the endless void of space, and that, of all the untold billions of people in all of history, she was no exception.

"Not like he notice," Ace reminded herself. "Not like he'd care…"

ALT 4: "WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME?"

2 and a half billion years by jamie

From the opposite side of the console, Clara stared at the Doctor. Her emotions were all over the place. She had just seen her best friend in the whole wide universe actually kill someone. Well, not actually kill, but as good as.

"Is it true?" she blurted out, piercing his stern concentration.

"Is what true, Clara?" he retorted, trying not to look up and meet her stare. If he did, he feared he wouldn't be able to lie. Not to her, not to Clara.

"Oh come on. We've known each other long enough that I expect, no, I am owed the truth. How long were you trapped in the Confession Dial?" She stood with her usual commanding presence, but deep down she was more nervous than ever. There was a part of her that didn't want to know the truth, because then it would feel real.

The Doctor muttered his response, barely audible. Even the Squibblies wouldn't have been able to hear him.

Fed up with his reluctance, she walked around the console. In doing so, the Doctor did too. He did his best to avoid her, but eventually she caught him.

"I didn't quite catch that."

The Doctor muttered again, and this time Clara grabbed his arm, pulling him away from his fixation on the console.

"Enough, Doctor! Please."

"Fine. If you want to know so much, then fine. The Time Lords are idiots. They thought that I'd just walk away from you and fall into their laps and confess my deepest darkest secrets. What they weren't prepared for, was just how seriously I take my duty of care. Clara, I promised you I would get you home in one piece, and that is a promise I am willing to die for, and I did. Many, many times. Two and half billion, or thereabouts give or take a couple hundred."

Still holding onto his arm, she could feel the tears forming around her eyes. This TARDIS hadn't even left Gallifrey, and now it was witnessing the hybrid in action, at the height of their relationship.

"Doctor..." she began, rubbing away the tears with her sleeve.

“I paid the price for my recklessness. I accepted that my time was up, you should have too. Why put yourself through so much pain?”

Swerving around on his heel, the Doctor faced away. He once told Clara that he didn't like hugs, as they are a great way to hide your face and thus your true emotions. His face was moving in ways he wouldn't dare let anyone see. The pain, the agony, the grief, the love.

“Clara. Clara, Clara.”

He span around once more, this time facing her. He found her so hard to lie to, she knew him inside and out.

“I have a duty of care, and above all, I couldn't live with myself knowing I ignored the signs. I saw you getting more reckless, more like stupid old me. I should have intervened, I should have stopped you a long, long time ago.” He walked closer to her, and held out a hand.

She met his hand with hers, as they stared at one another. Two people with such complicated lives, intertwined like no other. Just for a moment, as they whirled through space and time once more, they felt at peace in their love for one another. The Doctor and Clara Oswald, in the TARDIS.

TARDIS GUIDE

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